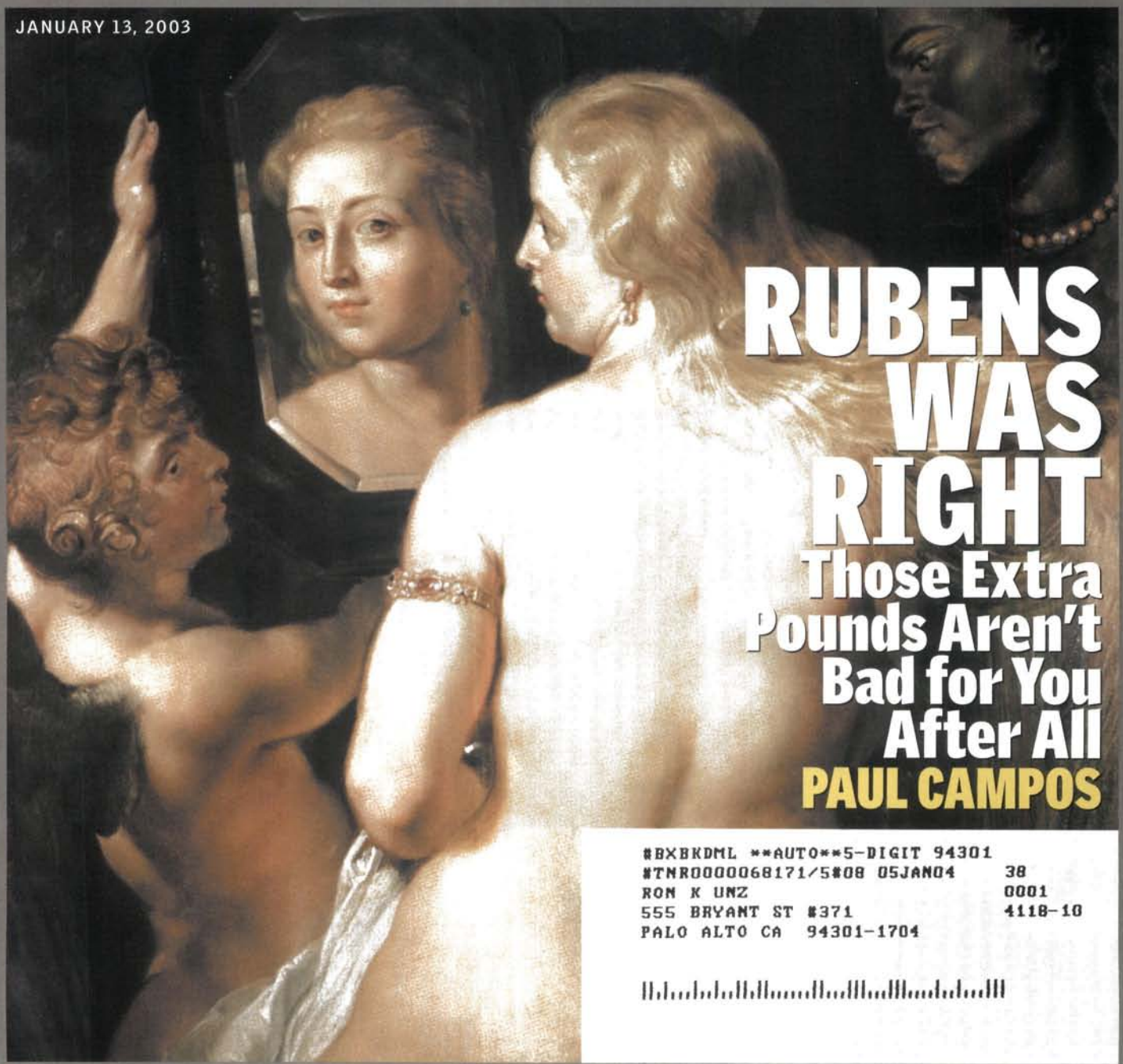
THE WHITE HOUSE'S NORTH KOREA COMPLACENCY Ryan Lizza, The Editors

THE NEW REPUBLIC

BILL FRIST'S COMPROMISES
Peter Beinart

LARRY DAVID'S INSIGNIFICANCE
Lee Siegel

JANUARY 13, 2003



RUBENS WAS RIGHT
Those Extra Pounds Aren't Bad for You After All
PAUL CAMPOS

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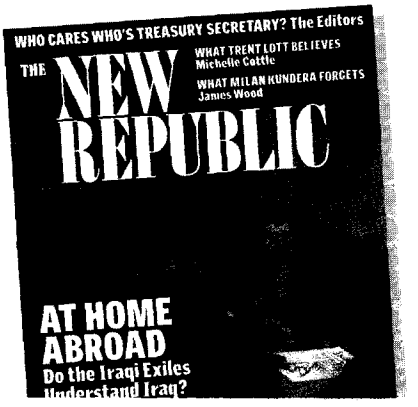

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Armed guards

TO THE EDITORS:

I take exception to Jonathan D. Tepperman's article "Out of Service" concerning the U.S. government's efforts to protect Afghan President Hamid Karzai (November 25). The Bush administration takes Karzai's security very seriously and recently turned over this responsibility to the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), the law enforcement and security arm of the State Department. DSS special agents protect more dignitaries around the globe each year than any other U.S. government agency and are well-versed in the nuances of diplomacy and security. Clearly, the situation in Afghanistan presents unique challenges. Therefore, the DSS special-agent detail will receive support from contractors of DynCorp, Inc. in the protection of Karzai. These well-trained contractors are former military personnel who have served their country with pride and distinction and are highly motivated to safeguard one of America's key allies in the war on terrorism. Their vast experience with working in environments where rule of law has deteriorated is a valuable asset. These DynCorp contractors operate under direct supervision of DSS special agents, who also have been specially trained for this mission. The DSS has established strict guidelines and rules of engagement for DynCorp, and, in times of emergency, the entire detail will have the assistance of the U.S. military forces in Afghanistan.

Contrary to the assertions made in the article, the State Department provided answers to all questions and concerns raised by the appropriate congressional oversight committees before the funding was released for this protective detail to proceed. The DSS/DynCorp team comprises well-qualified professionals who have the complete confidence of President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell, and they deserve the support of the American people.

FRANCIS X. TAYLOR
Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security
U.S. State Department
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:

Despite what Tepperman's article claims, the International Peace Operations Association (IPOA) is *not* an industry "lobbying group." I personally founded IPOA to advocate the use of military-service companies

HOW NOT TO TRAIN A DOCTOR Siddhartha Mukherjee
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INTO THE WILDERNESS
NANCY PELOSI'S NEW DIRECTION FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

to support peacekeeping efforts that are floundering due to a lack of effective Western military support. Although Tepperman appears to believe these companies are evil incarnate, we are confident their services could, for example, easily save the lives of the 2,500 civilians dying every day in the Democratic Republic of Congo simply by employing their unique services under the U.N. mandate and supporting the U.N. forces already deployed.

Nor do we need James Bonds to provide day-to-day protection for Karzai in Afghanistan. We do need competent professionals, and DynCorp has hired the best: Special Forces veterans with even more experience than the team currently doing the job. Contrary to Tepperman's belief, there are not 40,000 U.S. Special Forces but less than 9,000—and many of those are support staff. Their limited numbers can be used more effectively elsewhere, including tracking down Al Qaeda remnants in Afghanistan, the Philippines, and around the world.

Finally, Tepperman falls into the common trap of blaming the companies for U.S. policies. That is like blaming the waiter for the chef's mistakes.

DOUG BROOKS
President
International Peace Operations Association
Alexandria, Virginia

JONATHAN D. TEPPERMAN REPLIES:

In their responses to my article on Washington's misguided decision to use mercenaries to protect Karzai, both Francis Taylor and Doug Brooks misstate a number of facts and end up conceding far more than they refute. To begin with, it would have been wonderful if the State Department had been as forthcoming with details as Taylor suggests it was. Unfortunately, congressional staffers and legislators (not to mention members of the press) have complained that it is virtually impossible to get any information on the Afghan mission—or indeed, about other missions around the globe where this administration uses private contractors to do the work of the military. This is because, in part, the government cannot be legally compelled to disclose information about its private contracts (unlike formal military assignments). That's one of the reasons using hired guns is so dangerous in the first place.

There is little doubt that, as Taylor claims, DynCorp personnel sent to Afghanistan will be top-notch and receive the support of the U.S. military. The fact remains, however, that oversight will be difficult. Worse, should problems arise, legal accountability will be nonexistent. And such problems will inevitably crop up. Not only does DynCorp have an unsavory record in this regard (a point neither Taylor nor Brooks addresses); civilians—even mercenaries who were once soldiers themselves—also simply cannot cooperate with the armed forces as smoothly as could active-duty troops. All of DynCorp's requests for communications, intelligence, and air support will have to be filtered through extra levels of bureaucracy, creating delays and potential snags. In a mission as delicate as this one, these could prove fatal.

Brooks, for his part, claims that private military contractors can be effective not only in Afghanistan but in helping resolve various African conflicts. He is quite right—in fact, I made this point myself in my article, when I pointed to the role of South African mercenaries in ending the recent civil war in Sierra Leone. The problem is that hired guns tend to favor quick and dirty solutions and have too often shown a serious disregard for safeguarding civilians—which could be disastrous in Afghanistan, where anti-Western sentiment is already growing. Brooks also has two quibbles that deserve address. He insists that his organization, which goes by the Strangelovean title International Peace Operations Association, is not an industry "lobbying group." Perhaps not technically, but the IPOA does identify itself as "an association of Military Service Provider companies" that works, according to its website, to "educate the public and policy-makers on the industry's activ-

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ities and potential." Next, Brooks suggests that I inflated the number of U.S. Special Forces by setting the total at 40,000. He favors a much smaller figure, 9,000, but he doesn't explain how he reached that sum. Although the military doesn't release official numbers, I lowballed the total; on December 12, *The Washington Times* (citing leaked Pentagon memos and interviews with Defense Department staff) estimated that the Special Forces include 47,000 troops. In the unlikely event that Brooks is right and most industry experts are wrong, however, it still simply beggars belief to suggest that a mere 40 soldiers cannot be spared to safeguard one of America's vital interests—namely, Karzai.

The larger point, which both Brooks and Taylor avoid, is that in military missions like this one, which are critical to U.S. security, we should care enough to send the very best: namely, crack U.S. commandos. Instead, for political reasons, Washington has chosen to scrimp and duck for cover, using contractors to do a job it should be doing itself. It is gambling that DynCorp will be up to the job. But Karzai's life hangs in the balance, and we may all have to pay the price if Washington turns out to be wrong.

Loss leader

To the editors:

Representative Harold Ford's run for Democratic leader caused some to ask the question, "What has he done?" ("Hurry Up," Ryan Lizza, November 25). The answer: quite a bit for a member entering his fourth term who has spent his entire career in the minority. For example, he actively contributed to and campaigned for Democrats around the country this year, giving nearly $80,000 to candidates in the last election cycle. Ford was a co-chair of the Democratic Coordinated Campaign in Tennessee, which helped elect Phil Bredesen as governor, the first Democrat to win statewide office in more than ten years. He helped to raise more than $150,000 for the Tennessee Democratic Party. He stumped for Democrats in key House and Senate races, including Representative Dennis Moore, Senator Mary Landrieu, and Representative Bob Clement. His decision not to run for the Senate in 2000 did not prevent a strong candidate from running then, and the decision to forego a contested primary this year helped unify the Democratic Party behind Clement.

As for the charge that Ford has accomplished little legislatively, the opposite is true. Ford was a pivotal player in the campaign finance reform debate, convincing many of his Congressional Black Caucus colleagues to support it. When President Bush unveiled an overly broad resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq, Ford joined a bipartisan group to pass a much-improved resolution that helped the administration win support in the United Nations. Ford was also part of a handful of pro-trade Democrats to push for the inclusion of unemployment and health care assistance for laid-off workers in the bill, which gave the president authority to negotiate trade deals. He also urged the president to back a tough corporate-accountability bill.

Those who say they found Ford difficult to work with on his Democratic National Convention speech were not happy that Ford refused to give a speech that focused solely on the civil rights movement and ignored the experiences of a generation of Americans who feel their leaders have lost touch with them. Regardless of what party operatives say about who helped with the speech, Ford wrote it; Republican pollster Frank Luntz, a former professor at the University of Pennsylvania—where Ford attended school—did not. In the end, Ford was widely praised for giving a visionary address.

As Ryan Lizza says, Ford's bid for leader is good for Democrats. Politics is about being on the offensive, and Ford's interpretation of the election was that Democrats played too much defense. He felt strongly that change was needed. By calling for an accelerated package of tax cuts in place of cuts that benefit the ultra-wealthy and do not take place for many years, Ford believes Democrats can reclaim the pro-growth mantle they lost after 2000. In addition, he believes that the party must rebuild its credibility on national security issues in the post-September 11 world. Ford's hurry to change things came after House Democrats were unsuccessful for the fourth straight election. However, he is committed to working with the current leadership and believes his unsuccessful bid will help push the party to work even harder to reclaim the majority in two years.

Mark J. Schuermann
Chief of Staff
Representative Harold Ford Jr.
Washington, D.C. ■

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TRB

FROM CAPE TOWN

African Art

THE STRANGE circumstances of Bill Frist's ascension have forced him to answer a question Republican senators don't often face: What has he done for black people? Luckily for the GOP, the incoming Senate majority leader has an answer. And that answer is his work on Africa.

I don't mean his medical work. Frist's dramatic, self-piloted journeys to perform surgery in war-torn African hospitals feature prominently in virtually every profile of the Tennessee senator. But they testify to his decency and courage as a person, not his decency and courage as a senator.

Frist's more politically relevant work stems from his two-year chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs. And, in this obscure corner of Congress, the Tennessee senator has amassed a record that hints at his likely performance in his new, far more public role. It is a record of decency, but, unfortunately, not of courage.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Frist's chairmanship is that he requested it at all, asking then-Senator John Ashcroft to cede him the gavel of a subcommittee that attracts few cameras and distributes no pork. Frist has used his chairmanship to tackle three key issues. First, and most admirable, is his work on Zimbabwe. In July 2001, with President Robert Mugabe using mob violence to bludgeon white farmers and black political opponents into submission in the run-up to elections, the Senate passed Frist's Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001. The bill called on President Bush to stiffen U.S. sanctions against Mugabe's thug government, and that alone would have represented a fitting sequel to America's boycott of apartheid South Africa in the 1980s. But Frist's legislation went further, doubling U.S. aid for democracy promotion in Zimbabwe and thus assisting the country's beleaguered opposition—something Washington never did for Nelson Mandela's African National Congress. And, perhaps most impressive of all, Frist's bill allocated $20 million for land reform in Zimbabwe to be spent when democracy is restored. By recognizing the plight of Zimbabwe's landless black masses, Frist's bill brilliantly undercut the far left's claim that America's real concern in Zimbabwe isn't democracy but white privilege. If I ran the Republican National Committee, I'd buy ads publicizing Frist's work on Zimbabwe on every black radio station in the United States.

But, on Zimbabwe, Frist faced no serious opposition inside the GOP. The same can't be said of his two other major African initiatives: Sudan and AIDS. And it is these two initiatives that provide the truest picture of the political character of the next Senate majority leader.

Several of Frist's heroic medical missions have taken him to southern Sudan, home to a 19-year, unbelievably savage war by the Muslim government in Khartoum against the Christian and animist peoples of the region. Since 1997, U.S. policy has prohibited American oil companies from doing business with Sudan in the hope of denying Khartoum the revenue it needs to fight a war that has left over two million dead and four million displaced. But, in a July 1998 *Washington Post* op-ed, Frist wrote, "Our policy toward Khartoum looks tough on paper, but it has yet to pose a serious challenge to ... [Khartoum's] ability to finance the war." So, in 1999, he introduced legislation that went further—barring *foreign* oil companies working in Sudan from raising money in U.S. capital markets such as the NASDAQ and the New York Stock Exchange.

In June 2001, the House overwhelmingly passed a bill containing Frist's capital market sanctions. But, with the legislation gathering momentum, Wall Street and its K Street friends rose up in opposition. The White House made it clear that it wanted the capital market sanctions removed from any Senate bill. And so Frist, already the Bush administration's closest Senate ally, had to choose between his political allegiances and his moral ones. Had Frist forced the issue, he might have won. The Christian right cares deeply about Sudan's brutalized Christians, and Bush couldn't have easily vetoed a bill imposing tough new sanctions on their oppressors. But Frist let the White House off the hook. "The senator has fallen strangely silent," noted an August 2001 op-ed in *The Washington Post*. And, with Frist's acquiescence, capital market sanctions were stripped from the Senate bill.

On AIDS, the story is similar. In a dramatic March 2002 op-ed in *The Washington Post*, longtime foreign aid nemesis Jesse Helms announced that he and Frist would propose increasing America's international anti-AIDS budget by $500 million. This "much needed increase in funding," Frist said at the time, would "demonstrate our continued resolve to be a compassionate nation, which refuses to simply look the other way." As spring gave way to summer, Helms's deteriorating health left Frist as the initiative's chief backer. But, in June, with the AIDS increase about to go to a Senate vote, Frist suddenly announced he was scaling it back to only $200 million. Frist's office told *The Washington Post* that he was responding to a White House veto threat. But as a *Post* editorial noted, "The AIDS amendment was a small part of a vast anti-terrorism bill, so it's not clear this threat was credible." Once again, Frist chose his relationship with the Bush administration over his commitment to Africa. The White House handed Frist a fig leaf, promising to fund the additional $300 million over the next two years. But that money will probably never arrive. In fact, the Bush administration—worried about the metastasizing budget deficit it helped produce—hasn't even appropriated the $200 million Congress passed in 2002. The *Post* editorial page, which has crusaded for higher AIDS funding, titled its June editorial "SEN. FRIST BACKS DOWN."

It is worth noting, in both the Sudan and AIDS fights, that Frist's instincts were right. He placed his concern for Africa's suffering people above the free-market fundamentalism and anti-foreign-aid dogmatism that inhibit many other conservatives from pursuing truly compassionate policies toward the world's poorest continent. If left to his own devices, Frist would have enacted policies that would have saved African lives.

But Frist wasn't left alone. He confronted a White House with far less noble priorities, and, by making those priorities his own, he preserved the political alliance that has now made him the most powerful Republican in the U.S. Senate. Some recent Frist profiles have wondered whether this heart and lung surgeon, used to the independence and control of the operating room, can master the deal-making, morally compromised, hyper-political world of the U.S. Senate. The answer, sadly, is that he already has.

PETER BEINART

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Blind Side

FOR THE CHARTER members of the "axis of evil," last week was a good week. At the United Nations, our European allies refused to second Washington's claim that Iraq was in "material breach" of Security Council resolutions. Not to be outdone, Tehran elicited a pledge from Russia to supply fuel for Iran's atomic ambitions. These developments were troubling, but they were not surprising. The surprise came instead from Washington, in the form of the Bush administration's response to North Korea's announcement that it would restart its nuclear program and eject the international inspectors who monitor the country's nuclear reactor at Yongbyon. Like Iraq and Iran, its fellow spokes in the axis, North Korea has been chasing weapons of mass destruction for years and boasts a lengthy record of aggression abroad and brutality at home. Given this history, how did members of the Bush team react to Pyongyang's alarming declaration? With a unanimous yawn.

Were North Korea to begin extracting plutonium from the fuel rods stored at the Yongbyon facility, arms control experts believe that the nation could have in its possession five nuclear weapons in as many months. A cause for concern? Quite the contrary. Secretary of State Colin Powell insisted the standoff with Pyongyang was "not a crisis." A senior administration official told *The Washington Post* that "no one's really concerned right now." White House spokesman Scott McClellan defended these sanguine assessments by pointing out that North Korea is no Iraq. "The regime in Iraq has shown recently that it is more than willing to invade its neighbors," McClellan instructed. "It is a brutal dictatorship." Odd, we thought that North Korea was not only a brutal dictatorship but also a reckless proliferator of dangerous military technology. And aren't 37,000 American troops in the region because of North Korea's demonstrated proclivity toward invading its southern neighbor? But, apparently, when the United States has no coherent response to a crisis, it ceases to be a crisis. And so, in the matter of North Korea, there is now no significant difference between George W. Bush and Jimmy Carter.

The complacency that seems to abound in Washington masks real confusion over what to do about North Korea. During the two years since entering office, the Bush team has zigged and zagged wildly on North Korea policy—from Powell's initial announcement that Bush would continue his predecessor's engagement policy to Bush's disavowal of that policy, and then from an offer of "comprehensive dialogue" in 2001 to a declaration in 2002 that Pyongyang must suspend its nuclear program before dialogue resumes. In recent weeks, rather than sending a high-level envoy such as Powell to Korea, the administration has chosen Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly as their point man. Meanwhile, Bush himself, after weeks of silence, emerged from his ranch to offer vaguely, "All options, of course, are always on the table for any president, but by working with [countries in the region], we can resolve this."

Yes, all options are on the table. That is the problem. It is past the time to commit to one. It may be true that all of the policy alternatives available are imperfect; but an imperfect policy will be better than no policy at all. And, politically appealing though it may be, nonchalance (which also looks like hypocrisy in a time when we are preparing for a preemptive war against Iraq) is not a policy. True, administration officials claim they will not reward North Korea for its conduct, and, by keeping a low profile, they avoid considering such rewards. But it is not clear that they will punish Pyongyang either. And, by pretending that the reactivation of a nuclear reactor is no reason to lose sleep, the Bush team has merely encouraged the North's Stalinists to believe that they can act without regard to consequence. Administration officials even hint that they may refer the whole problem to the United Nations. This, too, is hardly an indication of steadfastness, particularly coming from an administration known for the contempt in which it holds that institution.

The administration has elected to see Saddam Hussein's lethal, region-menacing arsenal and not to see Kim Jong Il's lethal, region-menacing arsenal. We do not see a distinction with a difference. It is true that there is no oil in the Sea of Japan, but our troop deployments in the Persian Gulf are not supposed to be about oil; they are supposed to be about the international emergency that the regime in Baghdad represents. The regime in Pyongyang also represents an international emergency. The Bush administration has been breaking new ground in tough talk, and it should be held to its own standards of toughness. What can we say? When it comes to stopping evil, the power of the United States is what there is. ■

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NOTEBOOK

OSAMA'S MAN IN WEST AFRICA: Longtime readers of this magazine will recall our occasional reports on Liberian President Charles Taylor, one of the most corrupt and vicious dictators in the world today. Mostly, we have been amazed at how many supposedly respectable American figures have struck up friendships, made deals, or sought alliances with Taylor, an irredeemable thug responsible for over a decade of horrendous war in West Africa. Jesse Jackson, then Bill Clinton's envoy for democracy and human rights in Africa, bragged of his personal bond with Taylor and acted as the tyrant's agent in negotiating a disastrous peace agreement with Sierra Leone, which essentially handed over the country's diamond resources to a Taylor-controlled band of terrorists known as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). (The accord actually made the RUF's commander, Foday Sankoh, who is expected to be tried for war crimes, the vice president of Sierra Leone.) Televangelist Pat Robertson literally went into business with Taylor, buying—this is not a joke—a gold mine in Liberia and sharing the profits with Taylor's regime. When Taylor sent his wife Jewel abroad to burnish his image in the United States, she was received at the White House for an audience with Hillary Clinton. And longtime Democratic bigwig Lester Hyman has served as Taylor's lobbyist in Washington off and on for ten years. We were reminded of this pro-Taylor rogue's gallery on December 29, after reading an exceptional front-page piece in *The Washington Post* by Douglas Farah, who covered Taylor and West Africa for several years. Farah was evacuated from the region in November 2001 after receiving a credible report that a top Taylor henchman, Ibrahim Bah, was going to kill him. The reason? Farah had reported that Bah and Taylor were selling diamonds to Al Qaeda. We suspect that Bah and Taylor will be equally unhappy with Farah's latest article. He documents in far greater detail the relationship between Taylor and Al Qaeda. After the 1998 African embassy bombings, the United States cracked down on terrorists' financial networks, prompting Al Qaeda to convert many of its financial assets into precious stones. Taylor and the RUF, who control West Africa's illicit diamond trade, were all too happy to help. Not only has Taylor authorized the RUF to sell Al Qaeda some $20 million in diamonds since 1998; but, after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, according to Farah's report, Taylor received $1 million in cash to harbor the top Al Qaeda operatives in the diamond scheme, two of whom were on the FBI's "Most Wanted" list of terrorists. Besides further humiliating folks such as Jackson and Robertson, who have befriended Taylor over the years, these latest allegations also raise the question of what the administration plans to do about Osama bin Laden's West African connection. According to the *Post*, "Senior European intelligence sources said they have been baffled by the lack of U.S. interest, particularly by the CIA, in their recent findings." We are baffled, too. American officials at both the State Department and the Defense Intelligence Agency have in the past told THE NEW REPUBLIC that they couldn't corroborate the Liberia–Al Qaeda allegations. Farah's latest reporting, however, should give the Bush administration all the corroboration it needs. The question now is what it will do with it.

BAD MEDICINE: By conspicuously promoting Bill Frist, an accomplished transplant surgeon, as the successor to Trent Lott as Senate majority leader, President Bush hoped to send a signal about the contemporary Republican Party and its comfort with scientific modernity. But, if you want to understand what the Bush administration is really up to, it's usually better to ignore its public symbolism and scrutinize its behind-the-scenes decisions. Last month, right around the same time that Frist's name started popping up in the news, administration officials at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) unveiled some "revisions" to the public health information made available on the department's website. In the past, a Web page from the National Cancer Institute had offered information about the purported link between abortion and breast cancer; specifically, it had said, "The current body of scientific evidence suggests that women who have had either induced or spontaneous abortions have the same risk as other women for developing breast cancer." The statement was absolutely true: Although researchers once suspected, based on anecdotal evidence and self-selecting surveys, that there might be a link between abortions and breast cancer risk, subsequent research in controlled, clinical settings—including a 1997 study in *The New England Journal of Medicine*—demonstrated rather conclusively that no such link existed. But religious conservatives have continued to promote the early findings, unreliable as they are, because they conform neatly to their anti-abortion agenda. Now HHS has given this shoddy, politicized science the government's imprimatur. The new Web page presents the alleged abortion–breast cancer issue as a great mystery, with "some studies" showing a link and "other studies" not, as if it was still a raging scientific controversy. (It's worth noting that, in addition to terrifying women who have had or are considering induced abortions, this also needlessly scares women who have suffered spontaneous abortions, i.e., miscarriages.) Nor is this the only place where Bush's HHS has replaced good information with bad in order to please social conservatives. The department has also altered an online fact sheet from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about condoms and sexually transmitted diseases. The old Web page noted that the primary reason for condom failure was "incorrect or inconsistent use, not failure of the condom itself." It went on to list five steps for effective condom use. That information is now gone, along with information about which condoms are most effective (i.e., why latex is better than lambskin). Naturally, the administration has also tinkered with material about sex education. Before the change, the website noted that studies

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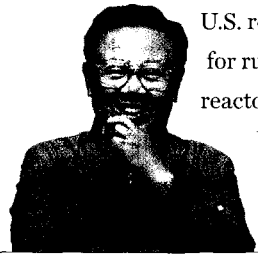
showed no link between sex ed and increased promiscuity—a finding, again, entirely consistent with the existing scientific consensus. That statement has also vanished. The White House may pretend that Dr. Frist is the face of the new Republican Party, but you'll forgive us if we continue to see the face of Dr. Rove instead.

YESTERDAY'S MEN: Warren Christopher is shocked, shocked, that North Korea has revived its nuclear weapons program—and revived it without so much as disguising the fact one bit. (This is a country where the fearsome Hans Blix will not have to go.) Christopher was also shocked when, during his tenure as deputy secretary of state in the Carter administration, an Iranian mob of pious Muslim students, behaving like hoodlums under orders from the sainted Ayatollah Khomeini, held 52 Americans in captivity at our embassy in Tehran and kept them hostage for 444 days. And, of course, during that same tenure, Christopher was shocked when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and tried to put it under the heel of communism. Doubtless, too, having been raised from the walking dead by Al Gore in postelection Florida after November 7, 2000, Christopher was shocked that James Baker was one of those Republicans who played rough in the streets. Writing this week on *The New York Times* op-ed page, Christopher argues that North Korea is the Bush administration's most pressing problem and that it needs to deflect its attention from Saddam Hussein, who does not yet have a bomb, to Kim Jong Il, who does. Of course, Christopher is coy about the circumstances that allowed Pyongyang to pursue its unconventional weapons program. These circumstances can be summed up simply: The Clinton administration believed it could deflect the North from its nefarious intentions by giving it some economic aid, and it signed a treaty to that effect that was negotiated by none other than Warren Christopher, then Bill Clinton's secretary of state. In a statement perhaps more revealing of his ambling character than of real political alternatives, Christopher observes, "Washington is chronically unable to deal with more than one crisis at a time." Leon Fuerth, too, is having his say. Fuerth, a member of the Clinton administration's National Security Council, published an op-ed in the *Times* the day after Christopher also criticizing the administration for "preparing to fight a war with a country that might eventually acquire nuclear weapons, while another country is closing in on the ability to go into mass production." Now it is true, as we note in this week's editorial, that the administration's indecisiveness on North Korea inspires little confidence. But it is more than a touch indecent that men who contributed to North Korea's capacity to pursue its nefarious nuclear ambitions (Christopher much more than Fuerth) should be lecturing others on how to deal with those consequences. ■

INSIDE THE BOX | Bruce Reed

KOREA SYNDROME



U.S. rebukes North Korea for rushing to reopen reactor. Pyongyang to White House: "But Mr. Cheney said you love nuclear power."

DUCK AND COVER

Bush promises missile defense system by 2004: "At the rate I'm going, we'll need it!"

MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

Baghdad gets little ink from Sean Penn visit. Saddam to Hollywood: "If you cared about peace, you'd send DiCaprio."

BUSH BOWL II

White House wants Iraq invasion by end of January. General Rove's battle plan: "The best Super Bowl halftime show ever!"

ABOUT FACE

GOP looks for ways to repair damage from Lott fiasco. Tops on Senate agenda: Confederate flag buyback program and tax credits for interracial dating.

DOCTOR IN THE SENATE

GOP gets heart transplant as Frist replaces Lott. Why White House picked Frist: "He really cares—so we don't have to!"

PIONEER SPIRIT

FEMA head Allbaugh quits to help prepare for Bush reelection campaign. Some disasters are more important to prevent than others.

CHECKERED FLAG

Religious followers of French race-car journalist claim first cloned human baby. America's reaction: Call us when you clone Dale Earnhardt.

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White House Watch

Crisis Control

By Ryan Lizza

Back in 2000, Condoleezza Rice, then George W. Bush's foreign policy tutor on the campaign trail, wrote an acid-pen essay in *Foreign Affairs* ridiculing the Clinton administration's response to almost every foreign policy challenge it faced. She didn't hold back on North Korea: "The Clinton administration has failed here, sometimes threatening to use force and then backing down." Today, of course, critics of the White House—many of them former Clintonites—are describing this administration's approach to Pyongyang in virtually identical terms.

For weeks, the administration had almost nothing to say about North Korea's apparent nuclear breakout. With Bush hidden away, first at Camp David and then at his Texas vacation home, it was finally left to Colin Powell last Sunday to try to explain what the administration thinks about Kim Jong Il's decision to reopen his nuclear reactor and fuel-reprocessing plant at Yongbyon and expel international nuclear inspectors—the first steps toward obtaining significant quantities of weapons-grade plutonium. Powell's main objective was to repeat the administration's outrageous assertion that history's first instance of nuclear weapons in the hands of an insane regime does not, in fact, constitute a crisis. (Only three months ago, Rice described North Korea's *last* attempt to produce weapons-grade plutonium at Yongbyon as "the crisis on the Korean Peninsula in 1994.")

Stranger still, the administration is hewing to this no-crisis line even as it asserts for the first time that North Korea is already a nuclear power. "We now believe they have a couple of nuclear weapons and have had them for years," Powell told Tim Russert on NBC's "Meet the Press." Since the early '90s, American officials have believed that North Korea had enough unaccounted-for fissile material to produce one or two bombs and left it at that. Obviously, these kinds of estimates can change, but Powell's sudden upgrade of the intelligence assessment of North Korea's nuclear capabilities—after two years of steady administration warnings that North Korea was "seeking" weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—smacks of an effort to dampen the sense of crisis by suggesting that there's simply nothing left to prevent. Asked if Bush would stop North Korea from obtaining more nuclear weapons, Powell shrugged, "Well, we'll see."

Indeed, so eager is the White House to play down the implications of a nuclear North Korea—and to keep the focus on Iraq—that Powell went on to make a still more irrational case for inaction. "Yes, [the North Koreans] have a large army, and, yes, they have had these couple of nuclear weapons for many years," he said. "And, if they have a few more, they have a few more, and they can have them for many years. But Iraq is a regime that has stood in defiance of sixteen U.N. resolutions, and we're waiting to see whether they're going to be in defiance of this new one." Who has time to worry about a rogue state illegally acquiring a nuclear arsenal when there are U.N. resolutions being broken?

Administration allies insist that the primary goal of this nonchalance is to avoid playing into North Korea's hands by overreacting. "By the secretary of state saying this isn't a crisis," says one senior congressional Republican aide with expertise on North Korea, "he's trying to get us to focus on the whole picture, not just the start-up of the reactor." In other words, now that we believe they have two bombs and a uranium-enrichment program, unfreezing Yongbyon isn't that big a deal. But if that is really the case, then the administration has been almost criminally negligent in waiting until this latest outburst by North Korea before revealing to the world how far it believes Kim Jong Il's nuclear program has advanced. Indeed, it's worth remembering that on the eve of the debate of the resolution giving Bush authority to attack Iraq, the administration failed to inform most of Congress—let alone the public—that North Korea had admitted to its uranium program.

The Bushies also chalk up their sanguine response to the fact that, compared with Iraq, the North Korean threat is a relatively new development. "The international community has been trying to resolve the situation in Iraq through diplomacy for eleven years," Bush said this week. "And for eleven years Saddam Hussein has defied the international community." The problem with this comparison is that North Korea has "defied the international community" for even longer. North Korea signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty in 1985. It first extracted plutonium at Yongbyon in 1989, during Bush 41's presidency. When North Korea tried to withdraw from the nonproliferation treaty in 1993, it produced a crisis that led to the Agreed Framework of 1994, which reaffirmed North Korea's commitment to a nuclear-free peninsula. A few years later, it started a secret uranium-enrichment program, and, this year, Kim Jong Il's regime declared the Agreed Framework null, kicked out international inspectors, and said it plans to restart the original reactor. Bush dubbed this kind of behavior by Iraq "a decade of deception and defiance." The White House says North Korea's actions are "regrettable."

To the extent that the administration seemed to have a set of principles, if not a specific policy, that would guide its handling of North Korea, those too have been set aside. In the preface to the administration's National Security Strategy, Bush himself writes cockily about our enemies' obtaining weapons of mass destruction: "The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed." Now his secretary of state shrugs, "If they have a few more, they have a few more." According to that same document, two pillars of the U.S. strategy to combat WMD proliferation are supposed to be preemption and interdiction. If the administration ever believed a preemptive strike at Yongbyon was feasible, it

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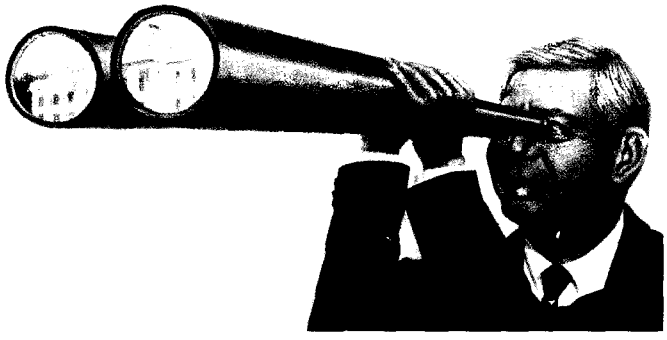
quickly abandoned the idea, leaving Bush looking foolish as his bluff was called. And, by letting Yemen receive a fresh delivery of North Korean Scud missiles last month, the White House has sent a message to the world that we aren't very serious about interdiction, either. "The fact that we stopped that missile delivery to Yemen and then let it go may have been a mistake," concedes a Capitol Hill Republican who is an expert on North Korea.

Finally, over the holidays, the administration leaked the idea of pursuing what it calls "tailored containment," a multilateral effort to isolate North Korea economically. But that plan, too, seems to have had a short shelf life. Neither South Korea nor China, the two essential allies in any embargo scheme, have expressed any enthusiasm. When asked about the plan, a State Department spokesman told reporters, "I don't think anybody has suggested at this point imposing sanctions. The secretary has not asked any nation to take economic action against this desperately poor country, North Korea." All of which would seem to leave Bush back where he started—without a policy. But maybe that's not so bad. After all, it's not even a crisis, right? ■

On the Hill

Campaign Diary

By MICHAEL CROWLEY



FLORIDA SENATOR BOB GRAHAM'S declaration last week that he is "seriously considering" seeking the Democratic presidential nomination wasn't exactly a well-conceived attention-getter. Graham offered his surprising news just two days before Christmas, with the political establishment off sipping eggnog. (*The New York Times* devoted 278 words on page A-20 to the revelation.) Odder still, Graham first declared his interest in running on a Haitian-American radio talk show in Miami—hardly "Meet the Press." It was, in other words, a trial balloon floated in the dark of night. But people close to Graham say he wasn't just speaking off the cuff. "He's very serious," says his old friend and former chief of staff, Charlie Reed. "He's got the fire."

Fire, to put it mildly, is not a word normally associated with Graham. The round-faced 66-year-old looks like he could be president of the AARP—or anyone's suntanned grandpa retired to a life of Florida golfing. Graham is a methodical man, famous for keeping diaries that chronicle—minute by minute—his meals, trips to video stores, and bathroom breaks. His Milquetoast appearances on television, where he has been a ubiquitous presence since the September 11 attacks, thanks to his co-chairmanship of he joint intelligence committee, tend to be as memorable as infomercials.

But lately there's been a change in Graham. His sensible, unremarkable commentary has become charged with a darker, almost apocalyptic vision of our national security. Where Graham once spoke in platitudes about the need to reform the intelligence community, he now speaks of "modern Armageddon" and of imminent, catastrophic terrorist attacks for which we are "scandalously ill-prepared." In November, he insisted, "There will be hell to pay for our vulnerabilities." As the early punditry has noted, Graham opposed Congress's Iraq resolution, making him unique in the broad field of Capitol Hill Democrats considering presidential runs. But Graham is no dove. Instead, he argues that the United States should be attacking several *other* Middle Eastern countries harboring terrorists—and he warns his colleagues that "blood is going to be on your hands" if they don't listen to him. While few people were paying attention, the most boring man in the Senate became the most hysterical. And that might just be his best hope for success.

IN MANY RESPECTS, Graham looks a lot like his fellow Democratic presidential aspirants: a centrist on domestic policy who opposes the Bush tax cut and supports both abortion rights and the death penalty. But it's Graham's unexpected foreign policy vision that could make him stand out.

Unlike the other 20 Democrats who voted against the October Iraq resolution, Graham wasn't worried that it was too tough but that it wasn't tough *enough*. "[T]his resolution is too timid. It is too limited. It is too weak," Graham explained on the Senate floor. He would be willing to support an Iraq invasion, he said, only if it expanded the president's authority even further, "to use force against all international terrorist groups who will probably strike the United States as the regime of Saddam Hussein crumbles." Warning of a massive terrorist retaliation for a war against Iraq, Graham offered up an amendment on October 8, three days before the final vote, that would have given President Bush the authority and mandate to go after several terrorist groups other than Al Qaeda—including Hamas; Islamic Jihad; the Abu Nidal organization; and, above all, the group he calls "the A-team," Hezbollah (see "Rough Trade," page 15). Graham described the failure of U.S. forces to strike against Hezbollah and other terrorist camps in Iran, Lebanon, and Syria as "inconceivable." The senator's dire rhetoric generated almost no debate, and his amendment collected just ten votes, leading him to vote against the final resolution.

RAY BARTKUS

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Yet Graham may be betting that his unusual hawk-dove two-step could distinguish him in a Democratic primary. On the one hand, his stand on the Iraq war will earn him credit with liberals for having opposed the president. On the other, centrists will remember his support for the 1991 Gulf war resolution and may appreciate his vehemence against terrorism. Of course, it remains to be seen whether a cry for attacks not on Iraq but Iran will rally voters (and whether Graham can adequately explain why Saddam deserves more time to build a nuclear weapon). But Democratic strategists say that, with the credentials he has earned on the intelligence committee and with his access to highly classified information, Graham will have a standing on security issues that rivals that of Vietnam veteran John Kerry. "He's staking out interesting and bold positions on foreign policy," says a party strategist. "There's a sense that he's an adult, that he's substantive."

There are other reasons why Graham could be a surprisingly viable candidate. His perch on the intelligence committee has made him an increasingly familiar face nationally; according to *Roll Call*, Graham had more Sunday talk-show appearances than any other member of Congress in 2002—a publicity bonanza that has boosted his stature. And Graham has some impressive admirers. When Bill Clinton spoke before the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) last month, his discussion of foreign policy began with the line, "First of all, we ought to listen to Senator Graham." (Clinton is a longtime fan who promoted Graham as a running mate for Al Gore in 2000.) One Graham aide says that after Clinton's speech several prominent Democrats who had attended the DLC gathering contacted Graham and urged him to consider a run.

In addition, several Democratic consultants said that while Graham would have to work hard and fast to catch up with rivals like Kerry and Dick Gephardt, he has built enough of a political network through his career—including his over eight years as Florida governor and 16 years in the Senate—to do so. In particular, they say, Florida is a gold mine for Democratic fund-raising, and several of the state's top moneymen will feel compelled to back a local product. "Anyone in my state has to consider a run by Senator Graham," says Fort Lauderdale attorney Mitchell Berger, who raised millions for Gore in 2000. Graham can also argue that he's more likely than any of his Democratic rivals to carry the precious swing state of Florida in 2004. Adds one unaligned Democratic strategist with extensive presidential campaign experience: "I think Graham could be a very credible candidate. ... He's going to have to catch a gust of wind, but he's well-positioned to do that."

There are, unfortunately, those notebooks, a source of mirth in every profile and conversation about Graham. For decades, he has carried pocket diaries in which he scribbles details about his days. When a *Time* magazine reporter asked to have a look in 2000, and Graham disastrously complied, what emerged was nothing short of bizarre: a narrative of virtually every waking moment, no matter how mundane. For instance:

> 8:25: Awaken at MLTH (Miami Lakes Town House)
> 8:45–9:35: Kitchen, family room. Eat breakfast, branola cereal with peach
> 9:35–9:40: Complete dressing. Watch "Meet the Press"
> 9:25–9:50: Drive to ABC studio

Graham chronicled his entire day this way. He even took note of the color of his pants and the amount of time spent rewinding a rented copy of *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective.*

Some reports suggested the excerpts instantly bumped Graham off Gore's V.P. list. Graham has never quite lived them down, and they're sure to haunt him again if he runs, less for any one detail than for their suggestion of an obsessive-compulsive mind. ("Is the over-examined life worth living?" one Democratic strategist jokes.) Then again, when a man is warning about Armageddon, it may be hard to fixate on the peculiarities of his personality. If Bob Graham runs, it will be as the Paul Revere of the war on terror. And there's nothing boring about that. ■

Bush's latest deficit fib.

Bad Debt

By JONATHAN CHAIT

PERHAPS THE HARDEST part of criticizing the Bush administration's economic logic is simply keeping track of it from week to week. Consider President Bush's view of deficits. His initial position, while peddling his tax cut on the campaign trail and in the first months of his presidency, was that a return to deficits was inconceivable. "We can proceed with tax relief without fear of budget deficits, even if the economy softens," he said in March 2001. "The projections for the surplus in my budget are cautious and conservative." When, in the late summer and early fall of that year, budget forecasts first showed deficits on the horizon, he dismissed them as "speculative" and "guesswork." When finally forced to acknowledge the inevitability of deficits last spring, he insisted they would be "small and temporary." Meanwhile, he'd begun laying the groundwork to shift the blame away from his tax cut and onto such factors as the September 11 attacks, the recession, and big-spending Democrats. But, with the recession and the terrorist attacks now receding into the past and unified control of the government in GOP hands, deficits are still projected to remain a large and permanent feature of the Bush presidency. And so it has become necessary for the administration to retreat to yet another new line of defense: Deficits don't matter.

The turnabout is fairly remarkable. Last spring, Bush said, "I'm mindful of what overspending can mean to interest rates or expectations of interest rates." As recently as September, he argued, "For the sake of fiscal sanity, the United States

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Senate must ... get us to head towards a balanced budget." But, since Republicans took the Senate in November, the White House has begun arguing that it makes no macroeconomic difference whether the budget is balanced or not. The point man for this argument is R. Glenn Hubbard, the chairman of Bush's Council of Economic Advisers. Hubbard has pooh-poohed the impact of deficits before, but now his arguments are taking on a new prominence, with the White House issuing charts and graphs bolstering his case. "One can hope that the discussion will move away from the current fixation with linking budget deficits with interest rates," Hubbard declared in a December speech. When asked about deficits raising interest rates, he sneered, "That's Rubinomics, and we think it's completely wrong."

THE BUSHIES USE the phrase "Rubinomics" so often, and with such contempt, that you'd think Robert Rubin was some sort of convicted swindler rather than a widely admired Treasury secretary. The phrase refers to the strategy developed in the first year of the Clinton administration. Inheriting a still-sluggish economy, the Clintonites decided, after much internal deliberation, to concentrate on deficit reduction—on the theory that this would lower long-term interest rates and thereby help stimulate economic growth. As surpluses appeared in the late '90s, Rubin and others argued for using them to pay down the national debt rather than to cut taxes or increase spending, for essentially the same reason. The result, of course, was fairly spectacular.

Now, one can argue that the '90s boom had little to do with "Rubinomics." But the Bush administration isn't merely disputing the importance of fiscal discipline; it's denying the factual premise that deficits affect interest rates—an elementary assumption shared by liberal and conservative economists alike. Interest rates, after all, are the price of borrowing money. There is only so much money out there to be borrowed at a given price. When the government borrows hundreds of billions of dollars, the supply constricts, raising the price for everybody else. Similarly, if Washington were to purchase a large chunk of the orange harvest and throw it into the Potomac, the price of oranges would, other things being equal, rise.

How, then, could the self-proclaimed free-marketers at the White House deny this supply-demand effect? Hubbard argues that global capital markets have made deficits virtually irrelevant. If government borrowing soaks up capital that would otherwise be used by U.S. businesses, this line of thinking goes, then overseas investors will just take up the slack. "Not surprisingly," he told an audience last month, "the evidence is that long-term interest rates do not move in lockstep with actual or expected federal budget changes."

But, while it's perfectly true that foreign investment can help cover for Washington's red ink, this doesn't make deficits any less bad. The ultimate problem with deficits is that they reduce the national savings rate, which is the proportion of our annual income that is not consumed. The savings rate is important because it measures Americans' ownership of productive assets—such as companies—that can produce future income. When the government runs deficits, it dips into the pool of money that would otherwise be used for buying productive assets and instead ties it up in financing government debt. Now, if you assume that foreign investors will replace every lost dollar, then interest rates won't rise, but that still does nothing for our savings rate. It simply means that companies that would have been producing future income for Americans will instead be producing future income for overseas investors. "Instead of reducing the domestic capital stock," write William Gale and Peter Orszag of the Brookings Institution, "budget deficits would represent a mortgage of the income from that capital, with the mortgage owned by foreigners."

So, even if Hubbard's argument were correct, it wouldn't mean that deficits don't harm the economy. It would only mean that long-term interest rates no longer reflect the level of harm they do. But, in any case, Hubbard's argument isn't correct. While global capital markets do *reduce* the link between deficits and interest rates, they don't make it disappear completely. Supply-siders like Hubbard like to point out that most historical studies find no such linkage. But that's because long-term interest rates are controlled by many factors other than deficits, which makes it difficult to prove a clear correlation. For instance, economic slowdowns cause deficits to rise, but they also tend to prompt the Federal Reserve to reduce the overnight lending rate, which lowers long-term interest rates, too. A perfect example of this phenomenon was brought up by, of all people, Hubbard himself. In his December speech, he pointed out that the interest rate on ten-year Treasury bonds is now nearly a full point lower than it was in January 2001, even though budget projections have moved from surpluses to deficits. Hubbard took this as yet another case of deficits failing to lead to higher interest rates. But of course the real reason rates fell is that the Federal Reserve aggressively cut short-term rates to help revive the economy. If it weren't for projected deficits, long-term rates would be even lower.

When Hubbard and other Bushies insist that there's no empirical evidence linking deficits with interest rates, they make a crucial error. If you look at the year-to-year numbers—say, the 2001 deficit and 2001 interest rates—they're right. But the market for long-term interest rates is forward-looking. What really moves it is not one-year spikes in the budget but changes in the long-term economic picture. Gale and Orszag, in a Brookings paper, compiled all the historical studies that compare long-term interest rates with *expectations* of deficits (e.g., forecasts from the Congressional Budget Office). And they found that such studies overwhelmingly show a correlation between deficits and interest rates. "[S]tudies that (properly) incorporate deficit expectations in addition to current deficits," they conclude, "tend to find economically and statistically significant connections between anticipated deficits and current long-term interest rates." Of the 19 studies that have failed to show any relationship between deficits and interest rates, all but one either did not account for expectations or did so only indirectly. Mean-

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while, of the 17 studies that did account for expectations, all but one showed a correlation.

In other words, economists have been right all these years: The laws of supply and demand do hold. When you constrict the supply of money available for borrowing, the price of borrowing goes up. Somebody inform the Bush economic team. ■

Oxford Dispatch

Bait and Switch

By Asher Price

The beer is cheap at the South Oxford Conservative Club—at least that's what the members remind you. They also point out the well-kept pool table and recommend Friday's lottery. But, despite these inducements, membership is declining at a precipitous pace. Over 500 people paid annual dues a decade ago, but now only 80 pay to enter this unglamorous, graffiti-scarred brick building with views of the Thames. On a recent Thursday night, the steering committee had its routine monthly meeting, and it was decided, once again, that the club should court new, younger members. The reason this is so urgent is that the current members are "all dying off," explains one longtime club member. "They used to talk politics here, but no more. It's Conservative in name only."

The collapse of Conservative politics isn't limited to South Oxford. Today's Tories are a shell of the vigorous party that Margaret Thatcher led to power in 1979 and that enjoyed wide support in Britain until the early '90s. Support for the party ebbed, and, in 1997, Tony Blair was able to oust Conservative Prime Minister John Major in a landslide. October's Tory Party Conference was a fractious circus. The old guard, led by former party Chairman Lord Norman Tebbit, claimed the Tories had recklessly abandoned Thatcherite policy. Younger party leaders retorted with shouts for Tebbit's excommunication. The only news that came out at the time of the conference that was of much interest to the British public was that former MP Edwina Currie had carried on a four-year affair with Major while he was chief whip. Party leader Iain Duncan Smith, known as the invisible man of British politics, remained, well, pretty much invisible until the conference's final day. Then, in a speech intended to distance himself from the intraparty sniping that had colored the conference, he declared himself to be a "quiet man."

Perhaps that's because he has no one to talk to. The average age of the Tory voter is well over 60, and young Tories are leaving the party in droves to join its historic enemy, the Liberal Democrats. The Tory Party, in other words, may be facing the same gradual extinction as the South Oxford Conservative Club.

Over the past decade, the Tories have been killed at the polls, thanks to the party's tone-deaf approach to two topics that dominate political debate in Britain—social mores and integration with Europe. Things have been going downhill for the Tories since Major's "Back to Basics" campaign, designed to position the party as socially conservative. Unveiled in a 1993 speech, Major's initiative called for "the old values of neighborliness, decency, and courtesy." "I believe that what this country needs is not less conservatism," said Major, "[but] more conservatism of the traditional kind." It was a tone that sounded outdated in an increasingly diverse Britain and simply hypocritical after a series of revelations in the mid-'90s about the personal peccadilloes of Tory MPs. Yet, even after Major's nostalgia about the "old values" failed to resonate with voters, his successor, William Hague, maintained the party's rightward lurch on social issues. In 1999, he demanded a "Common Sense Revolution"; in 2000, he added, "It's time we halted the march of political correctness." But Hague's sensibility turned out not to be that common: The Tories continued to lose seats in the 2001 elections.

Backing up their words, the Tories have pushed for socially conservative policies that have alienated younger, progressive voters. The Tories continue to waffle, for instance, on whether to rescind Section 28 of the Local Government Act of 1988 (passed by a Tory government), which forbids the so-called promotion of homosexuality by local authorities. Tories have also consistently called for bigger prisons and more stringent sentencing, and they have stubbornly clung to traditional education curricula throughout the '90s. Major, for one, bitterly staved off a group of 500 university English lecturers who petitioned to reform the curricula with the response, "Claptrap." And, in a country where hunting is a divisive social issue, Tories continue to invite elitist, conservative associations: Duncan Smith has signaled that he will overturn any ban on foxhunting should he become prime minister.

Worse, the Tories have seemed incoherent and irrelevant on matters relating to the European Union. While Major lashed out at the Europeans with bits of rhetoric—he warned the French to "Get your tractors off our lawn"—his generally ill-defined approach to the EU was dubbed "wait-and-see" by critics. For his part, Hague pegged Tory hopes of a return to power on a decidedly isolationist agenda. "Say whatever else you like about a Conservative Britain, but at least a Conservative Britain will still be Britain," he wrote in his 2000 pamphlet titled *Believing in Britain*. Hague even launched a "Keep the Pound" campaign intended to define a strong Tory position. Yet the pound campaign simply further fractured the party between Euroskeptics and advocates of integration with the Continent, and it alienated the voting public.

The Conservatives had a chance to reinvent themselves

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after the losses in 1997 and 2001. But, thanks to the particulars of the party electoral system, Tory MPs split votes between two popular progressive politicians, Kenneth Clarke and Michael Portillo, enabling the unheralded Duncan Smith, a 48-year-old Euroskeptic, to make it into a runoff with Clarke. After Duncan Smith won the second round of voting—conducted by party membership, who tend to be more conservative than Tory voters at large—talented young Tories, such as 28-year-old Karen Gillard, chair of the Tory Campaign for Homosexual Equality, having tired of the Tories' inflexibility, promptly defected to the Liberal Democrats.

For years, the conventional wisdom was that, by meddling in the shires, the Liberal Democrats, Britain's third major party, were accomplishing little more than helping to keep the Tories out of power. Lately, however, the Lib Dems, who occupy a position that tends to be just to the left of Blair's government, appear poised to replace the Tories as Labour's main opposition. (The Tories currently hold 163 seats in the House of Commons, while the Lib Dems occupy 53.) Why would young Tories defect to the Lib Dems, a party seemingly at the other end of the political spectrum? For one thing, Lib Dems' support of decentralized, local government appeals to many Conservatives. The party has also shown a pragmatic willingness to adopt Conservative planks, such as tough measures for violent crime. But a switch ultimately might have more to do with personal feelings than anything else. Tories see opportunities for promotion and action in a party that is not hamstrung by special interests or political infighting. The Lib Dems, meanwhile, have heavily promoted defectors and made them feel cherished. And, since Tories are conditioned to oppose Labour, a defection to the Lib Dems can seem not so much a betrayal as a shift to a more effective, cohesive opposition party.

Amid populations under age 30, Lib Dems consistently poll well, and they are broadening their appeal to include older voters as well. A summer survey of 11,000 16- to 29-year-olds conducted by *The Face* magazine put support for the Lib Dems at 33 percent and the Conservatives at just 17 percent. A November poll of respondents of all ages by the *Sunday Telegraph* showed votes split Tories and Lib Dems at 44 percent apiece as providing the best opposition to Blair's government.

Tory performance in the last two elections underscores these trends. In 1997, the Tories lost two dozen seats to Lib Dems; in 2001, they lost an additional seven. Of the 19 seats where Lib Dems came within 5 percentage points of winning in 2001, 15 are held by Tory MPs. And, if Tories thought 2001's general election was bad, the next one (slated for 2005) may be worse. In a survey conducted in mid-December by *The Guardian*, almost as many respondents said they intended to vote Lib Dem (23 percent) as said they intended to vote Conservative (27 percent).

Lib Dems are not about to let the opportunity pass them by: They have mobilized to court young, moderate, disenchanted Tories. Last spring, the Lib Dems set up a task force known as the Peel Group (after nineteenth-century Prime Minister and Tory defector Robert Peel) to woo wavering Tories. And, last May, Scottish Lib Dem MP Keith Raffan published an open letter to his former Conservative colleagues, explaining, "Dear understandably disillusioned Scottish Tory. Don't worry, you are not alone! There are many like you who are fed up with the present Conservative Party. They, too, believe it has gone off the radar screen—too extreme, way out-of-touch and obsessively anti-European." What's more, the Lib Dems, while still focusing on progressive issues like the abolition of prison time for possession of heroin, have successfully shifted their policies to the right just enough to make themselves palatable to Tories who are socially progressive or committed to European integration.

The Tories have responded only with more infighting. In December, Michael Heseltine, a former deputy prime minister, openly called for new party leadership. Tories don't have a "ghost of a chance" of winning the next election, he told *The Independent*. Party Chairman Theresa May retorted, "I think he should take up golf, like every other retired person." And, while Duncan Smith has dismissed Heseltine's machinations as "irrelevant," the cracks in the Tory ranks have effectively prevented the party from defending itself against Lib Dem raids.

Even if the Conservatives united around one leader and tried to change their party, it may already be too late for them to modify their image enough to appeal to younger voters. Following a Conservative measure in November to block a parliamentary vote on whether gay couples might adopt children jointly, former Tory Vice Chairman Steve Norris told the news talk show "GMTV" that the party risks looking "angry, elderly, and irrelevant." "Unless this party grows up," a senior Tory backbencher told *The Economist*, "it is unelectable." Quite the opposite, actually. ■

The U.S. coddles Syria.

Rough Trade

By Spencer Ackerman

Sheikh Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, secretary-general of the Shia terrorist group Hezbollah, doesn't mince words. In September, Nasrallah announced that "our enmity for the Great Satan [the United States] is absolute." His TV station, Al Manar, broadcasts imagery of a skeletal, blood-stained Statue of Liberty above the caption "the U.S. owes blood to all humanity." And, as a *New York Times* story noted last week, American officials and experts see Hezbollah getting ready to collect.

But, while Hezbollah appears to be preparing for battle against America, America is not preparing for battle against

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it. The Bush administration thus far has not pushed Syria, Hezbollah's main state patron, to crack down on its client. Instead, Washington has gambled that Syrian support in battling Al Qaeda is worth giving Damascus a pass on Hezbollah, which operates out of a base in southern Lebanon, a country under Syrian dominion.

But this gamble is not paying off. In the hope of being removed from the State Department's list of sponsors of terrorism, Syria has pledged support for the war on terror. Damascus's security services have helped to round up a few key Al Qaeda operatives, but Syria's aid has not resulted in the kind of top-level intelligence on Al Qaeda that the administration desires. At the same time, Hezbollah is becoming more dangerous, more comfortable with its Syrian sponsor, and more enthusiastic about a coming reckoning with the United States.

TO HEAR THE Bush team tell it, Syria has provided vital assistance in battling Osama bin Laden's organization—assistance that justifies ignoring Syria's patronage of Hezbollah. In June, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William J. Burns told a House International Relations Committee panel that help from Syrian intelligence has saved American lives. The most prominent example officials point to is information that Damascus provided about Mohamed Atta's Al Qaeda cell in Hamburg, extracted from a fellow conspirator in Syrian custody.

Yet this assistance has been limited and conditional. To detail Syrian anti-terror vigilance, American officials have publically identified only one conspirator: Mohammed Haydar Zammar, allegedly a member of the Hamburg cell. According to Matthew A. Levitt, a Syria expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the Syrian security apparatus has not even allowed its American counterparts to conduct an independent interrogation of Zammar. And, when the United States presses Damascus to increase its cooperation, the Syrians often refuse. A State Department official acknowledges, "There is a certain level of Syrian belief that they have gone as far as they can." Syrian-American scholar Murhaf Jouejati, son of a former Syrian ambassador to the United States, says that he visited Damascus in September, where he met with a senior Syrian military official. When the conversation turned to America's desire for increased Syrian anti-terrorist activity, the official threw his hands down in exasperation and growled, "What more do these people want?"

Even Damascus's supposedly exemplary information exchange on the Hamburg cell raises questions about Syria's commitment to fighting Al Qaeda. German investigators are speculating that Syria may have had information about the cell that they declined to share with Germany and the United States before September 11, 2001. Prosecutors focusing on a local import/export firm called Tatex Trading GmbH as a hub for Atta's money-laundering and visa arrangements discovered that one Tatex partner is Mohammed Majid Said, a former head of Syrian intelligence. While the investigators admit to some confusion, one theory about Said's involvement with Tatex holds that the Syrian official was trailing Aleppo-born Al Qaeda conspirators.

Meanwhile, Syria retains a close relationship with Hezbollah. As the main power broker in Lebanon after that country's two-decade civil war, Syria allowed Hezbollah to keep its arsenal of weapons while helping to force the disarmament of other groups that fought in the war. Hezbollah's utility to Damascus was clear. While Jordan and Egypt made peace with Israel, Syria remained in a perpetual cold war with the Israelis, and Hezbollah possessed the capability to strike across the border into Israel and against Israel's allies in southern Lebanon.

In fact, under new Syrian leader Bashar Al Assad, Syria actually has drawn closer to Hezbollah. Since the Palestinian intifada reignited Arab enmity toward Israel, Damascus's hard-line approach has come back in vogue, and appearing close to Hezbollah brings praise, not scorn, from Arab capitals. While Bashar's father, Hafez, refrained from actively arming Hezbollah—in order to maintain plausible deniability that Syria did not support Hezbollah—Bashar has been far bolder, selling 220-mm rockets to the terrorist group. According to Jouejati, for the Syrians to abandon Hezbollah now would be "almost impossible" since Syria has bolstered its national self-image as the vanguard of Arabism on its ties to the group.

And that group has become extremely threatening. "When you compare organizational capacity, ability to raise money, operatives around the world, Hezbollah is probably better run and more dangerous than Al Qaeda," says one administration official. In fact, in September, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage told a Washington audience that Hezbollah deserves a place on the "A Team" of global terrorism.

Hezbollah, which until recently had focused its attention on Israel, appears to be increasingly training its sights on the United States. Hezbollah already is believed responsible for the 1983 bombing of a U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut; the destruction of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992; and the 1994 detonation of the Argentine-Jewish Mutual Association, also in Buenos Aires. As *The New Yorker*'s Jeffrey Goldberg has documented, Hezbollah leaders now seem to view wiping out American Jews and others in the United States as an important part of the group's plan to eradicate Israel and world Jewry. When Goldberg interviewed Hezbollah spiritual leader Sayyid Fadlallah this summer, Fadlallah said the group now considered attacks outside of Israel part of "the logic of war." Then, in November, Nasrallah announced, "We view America as an enemy of the [Islamic] nation," and therefore "we must act in order to spread the concept of death [to the United States]."

The group appears to be backing up its leader's words. As Goldberg has reported, Hezbollah has become extremely active in North America. In the United States, Hezbollah has run smuggling operations to raise funds and developed a fund-raising network that overlaps with that of Al Qaeda. (According to court documents, the leader of Hezbollah's

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military unit, Imad Fayez Mugniyah, reportedly provided weapons training to bin Laden in Sudan in the mid-'90s.) The Canadian Security Intelligence Service believes a key Hezbollah operative is working out of Vancouver and that Canada is host to a number of planning and training activities for the terrorist group. Goldberg has also reported that Hezbollah agents have conducted photo and video surveillance of U.S.-owned buildings in South America, Southeast Asia, and in the United States itself, probably in anticipation of launching a strike.

SOME BUSH ADMINISTRATION officials agree that the limited assistance the United States receives from Syria is not worth a free pass on Hezbollah. Armitage has said that Hezbollah owes America "a blood debt" that the United States will collect "in good time." Richard Perle, the hawkish chairman of the Defense Policy Board, believes Washington must take a harder line on Syria since "the essential purpose of the war on terror [is] to raise the cost of support for state-sponsored terrorism."

Unfortunately, they are in the minority. Secretary of State Colin Powell has insisted only that Syria rein in Hezbollah attacks on northern Israel, not that it shut down Hezbollah's operations entirely. At a press conference in April, Powell stood by and said nothing while Lebanon's foreign minister, who is close to Syria, called Hezbollah a legitimate "resistance" movement. In September, the Bush administration sent Burns's deputy, David Satterfield, to the Hill to kill the Syria Accountability Act, which would impose stiff sanctions against Damascus until Syria ends its support for terrorist groups, its domination of Lebanon, and stops producing weapons of mass destruction. Most importantly, the bill would send a message that the United States refuses to let countries pick which terrorists they will or will not support. Powell had already sent a letter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee urging the bill's death on the grounds that "[n]ew sanctions on Syria would place at risk our ability to ... change Syrian behavior." Bush himself had derided the bill for "limit[ing] our options," and Satterfield made an in-person push, telling the House, "We're going to lose leverage on the diplomatic front." The bill's current prospects seem dim.

The administration's soft line toward Damascus seems to have sent Bashar the message that some nations can play both sides of the war on terror without much penalty. It is a message Syria's leader understands. In September 2001, when many in Arab capitals wondered how they could possibly temper a U.S. response to terrorism, Assad calmly boasted to Lebanon's *Al-Safir* newspaper, "We in Syria do not think the Arab and Islamic situation is weak; on the contrary, the Americans need the Arab and Islamic countries in order to forge the American coalition, and woo them ... [because] they need them for the battle." He continued, "All [we] need is patience." Sadly, with the Bush administration's help, Assad's prediction is coming true. ■

Why being fat isn't bad for you.

Weighting Game

By PAUL CAMPOS

PERHAPS AMERICA'S MOST common New Year's resolution is to lose weight. This week, as we push ourselves away from the increasingly guilty pleasures of the holiday table, we will be bombarded with ads imploring us to slim down with the help of health club memberships, exercise equipment, or the latest miracle diet. Yet, however common it may be, the resolution to lose weight appears to be a particularly ineffective one: The latest figures indicate that 65 percent of the adult population—more than 135 million Americans—is either "overweight" or "obese." And government officials are increasingly eager to declare America's burgeoning waistline the nation's number-one public health problem. The Surgeon General's recent *Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity* labels being fat an "epidemic" that kills upward of 300,000 Americans per year.

Such declarations lend our obsession with being thin a respectable medical justification. But are they accurate? A careful survey of medical literature reveals that the conventional wisdom about the health risks of fat is a grotesque distortion of a far more complicated story. Indeed, subject to exceptions for the most extreme cases, it's not at all clear that being overweight is an independent health risk of any kind, let alone something that kills hundreds of thousands of Americans every year. While having a sedentary lifestyle or a lousy diet—both factors, of course, that can contribute to being overweight—do pose health risks, there's virtually no evidence that being fat, in and of itself, is at all bad for you. In other words, while lifestyle is a good predictor of health, weight isn't: A moderately active fat person is likely to be far

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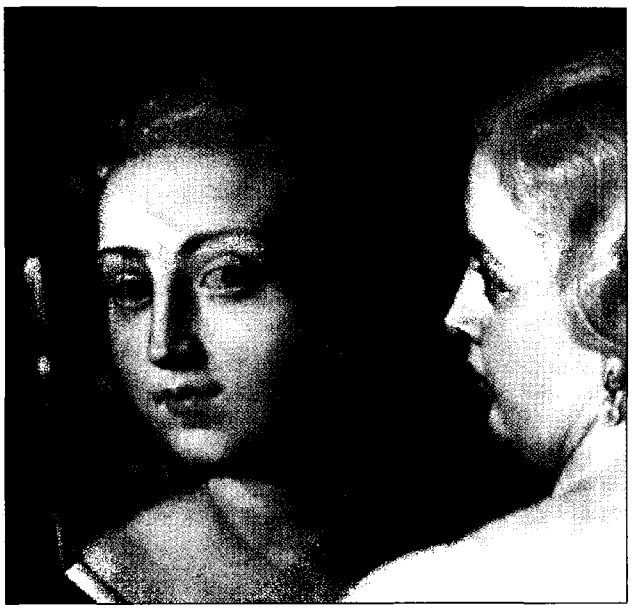
healthier than someone who is svelte but sedentary. What's worse, Americans' (largely unsuccessful) efforts to make themselves thin through dieting and supplements are themselves a major cause of the ill health associated with being overweight—meaning that America's war on fat is actually helping cause the very disease it is supposed to cure.

THE MOST COMMON way researchers determine whether someone is overweight is by using the "body mass index" (BMI), a simple and rather arbitrary mathematical formula that puts people of varying heights and weights on a single integrated scale. According to the government, you're "overweight" (that is, your weight becomes a significant health risk) if you have a BMI figure of 25 and "obese" (your weight becomes a major health risk) if your BMI is 30 or higher. A five-foot-four-inch woman is thus labeled "overweight" and "obese" at weights of 146 pounds and 175 pounds, respectively; a five-foot-ten-inch man crosses those thresholds at weights of 174 pounds and 210 pounds. Such claims have been given enormous publicity by, among other government officials, former Surgeons General C. Everett Koop—whose Shape Up America foundation has been a leading source for the claim that fat kills 300,000 Americans per year—and David Satcher, who in 1998 declared that America's young people are "seriously at risk of starting out obese and dooming themselves to the difficult task of overcoming a tough illness." And the federal government is beginning to put its money where its mouth is: Last April, the Internal Revenue Service announced that diet-related costs could henceforth be deducted as medical expenses, as long as such expenses were incurred in the course of treating the "disease" of being fat—a ruling that will create a multibillion dollar per year public subsidy for the weight-loss industry.



Yet, despite the intense campaign to place fat in the same category of public health hazards as smoking and drug abuse, there is in fact no medical basis for the government's BMI recommendations or the public health policies based on them. The most obvious flaw lies with the BMI itself, which is simply based on height and weight. The arbitrariness of these charts becomes clear as soon as one starts applying them to actual human beings. As *The Wall Street Journal* pointed out last July, taking the BMI charts seriously requires concluding that Brad Pitt, George Clooney, and Michael Jordan are all "overweight," and that Sylvester Stallone and baseball star Sammy Sosa are "obese." According to my calculations, fully three-quarters of National Football League running backs—speedy, chiseled athletes, all of whom, it's safe to say, could beat the world's fastest obesity researcher by a wide margin in a 100-yard dash—are "obese."

To be sure, even if the BMI categories can be spectacularly wrong in cases such as those involving professional athletes, they're often a pretty good indicator of how "fat" most people are in everyday life. The real question is whether being fat—as determined by the BMI or by any other measure—is actually a health risk. To answer this question, it's necessary to examine the epidemiological evidence. Since the measurable factors that affect whether someone contracts any particular disease or condition can easily number in the hundreds or thousands, it's often difficult to distinguish meaningful data from random statistical noise. And, even where there are clear correlations, establishing cause and effect can be a complicated matter. If researchers observe that fat people are more prone to contract, say, heart disease than thin people, this fact by itself doesn't tell them whether being fat contributes to acquiring heart disease. It could easily be the case that some other factor or set of factors—i.e., being sedentary or eating junk food or dieting aggressively—contributes both to being fat and to contracting heart disease.

Unfortunately, in the world of obesity research these sorts of theoretical and practical complications are often dealt with by simply ignoring them. The most cited studies purporting to demonstrate that fat is a major health risk almost invariably make little or no attempt to control for what medical researchers refer to as "confounding variables." For example, the research providing the basis for the claim that fat contributes to the deaths of 300,000 Americans per year—a 1999 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA)—did not attempt to control for any confounding variables other than age, gender, and smoking.

And, even among studies—such as the JAMA one—that ignore variables such as diet or activity levels, there is tremendous disagreement: For every study that indicates some sort of increased health risk for people with BMI figures between 25 and 30 (a category that currently includes more than one out of every three adult Americans), another study indicates such people enjoy *lower* overall health risks than those whom the government and the medical establishment have labeled "ideal-weight" individuals (i.e., people with BMI figures between 18.5 and 24.9). Perhaps the most comprehensive survey of the literature regarding the health risks of different weight levels is a 1996 study by scientists at the National Center for Health Statistics and Cornell Univer-

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sity. This survey analyzed data from dozens of previous studies involving more than 600,000 subjects. It concluded that, for nonsmoking men, the lowest mortality rate was found among those with BMI figures between 23 and 29, meaning that a large majority of the healthiest men in the survey would be considered "overweight" by current government standards. For nonsmoking women, the results were even more striking: The authors concluded that, for such women, the BMI range correlating with the lowest mortality rate is extremely broad, from about 18 to 32, meaning that a woman of average height can weigh anywhere within an 80-pound range without seeing any statistically meaningful change in her risk of premature death.

What accounts for the conflict between studies that claim being "overweight" is a significant health risk and those that suggest such weight levels might actually be optimal? The biggest factor is that researchers fail to point out that, in practical terms, the differences in risk they are measuring are usually so small as to be trivial. For example, suppose that Group A consists of 2,500 subjects and that over the course of a decade five of these people die from heart attacks. Now suppose that Group B consists of 4,000 subjects and that five members of this group also die from heart attacks over the same ten-year span. One way of characterizing these figures is to say that people in Group A are subject to a (implicitly terrifying) 60 percent greater risk of a fatal heart attack than those in Group B. But the practical reality is that the relevant risk for members of both groups is miniscule. Indeed, upon closer examination, almost all studies that claim "overweight" people run significantly increased health risks involve this sort of interpretation (or, less generously, distortion) of their data.

This phenomenon is in part a product of the fact that studies that purport to find significant elevations of mortality risk associated with different weight levels usually focus on mortality rates among relatively young adults. Since these studies typically involve very small numbers of deaths among very large numbers of subjects, it isn't surprising to see what appear to be large oscillations in relative risk across different studies. Indeed, one often observes large, apparently random oscillations in risk even *within* studies. Lost in the uproar over the JAMA study's 300,000 deaths figure is the peculiar fact that the report actually found that supposedly "ideal-weight" individuals with a BMI of 20 had essentially the same mortality risk as "obese" persons with BMI figures of 30 and that both groups had a slightly higher mortality risk than "overweight" people with BMI figures of 25.

In short, the Cornell survey of the existing literature merely confirmed what anyone who actually examines the data will discover: In a decided majority of studies, groups of people labeled "overweight" by current standards are found to have equal or lower mortality rates than groups of supposedly "ideal-weight" individuals. University of Virginia professor Glenn Gaesser has estimated that three-quarters of all medical studies on the effects of weight on health between 1945 and 1995 concluded either that "excess" weight had no effect on health or that it was actually beneficial. And again, this remains the case *even before* one begins to take into account complicating factors such as sedentary lifestyle, poor nutrition, dieting and diet drugs, etc. "As of 2002," Gaesser points out in his book *Big Fat Lies*, "there has not been a single study that has truly evaluated the effects of weight alone on health, which means that 'thinner is healthier' is not a fact but an unsubstantiated hypothesis for which there is a wealth of evidence that suggests the reverse."

As we have seen, most of the people the government and the health establishment claim are too fat—those categorized as "overweight" or "mildly obese"—do not in fact suffer from worse health than supposedly "ideal-weight" individuals. It is true that some groups of fat people—generally those with BMI figures well above 30—are less healthy than average, although not nearly to the extent the anti-fat warriors would have you believe. (Large-scale mortality studies indicate that women who are 50 or even 75 pounds "overweight" will on average still have longer life expectancies than those who are 10 to 15 pounds "underweight," a.k.a. fashionably thin.) Yet there is considerable evidence that even substantially "obese" people are not less healthy *because* they're fat. Rather, other factors are causing them to be both fat and unhealthy. Chief among these factors are sedentary lifestyle and diet-driven weight fluctuation.

The most comprehensive work regarding the dangers of sedentary lifestyle has been done at the Cooper Institute in Dallas. The institute's director of research, Steven Blair, is probably the world's leading expert on the relationship between activity levels and overall health. For the past 20 years, the Cooper Institute has maintained a database that has tracked the health, weight, and basic fitness levels of tens of thousands of individuals. What Blair and his colleagues have discovered turns the conventional wisdom about the relationship between fat and fitness on its head. Quite simply, when researchers factor in the activity levels of the people being studied, body mass appears to have no relevance to health whatsoever—even among people who are substantially "obese." It turns out that "obese" people who engage in moderate levels of physical activity have radically lower rates of premature death than sedentary people who maintain supposedly "ideal-weight" levels.

For example, a 1999 Cooper Institute study found the highest death rate to be among sedentary men with waist measurements under 34 inches and the lowest death rate to be among physically fit men with waist measurements of 40 inches or more. And these results do not change when the researchers control for body-fat percentage, thus dispensing with the claim that such percentages, rather than body mass itself, are the crucial variables when measuring the health effects of weight. Fat people might be less healthy if they're fat because of a sedentary lifestyle. But, if they're fat and active, they have nothing to worry about.

Still, even if it's clear that it's better to be fat and active than fat and sedentary—or even thin and sedentary—isn't it the case that being thin and active is the best combination of all?

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Not according to Blair's research: His numerous studies of the question have found no difference in mortality rates between fit people who are fat and those who are thin.

Of course, in a culture as anti-fat as ours, the whole notion of people who are both fat and fit seems contradictory. Yet the research done by Blair and others indicates that our belief that fatness and fitness are in fundamental tension is based on myths, not science. "Fitness" in Blair's work isn't defined by weight or body-fat percentage but rather by cardiovascular and aerobic endurance, as measured by treadmill stress tests. And he has found that people don't need to be marathon runners to garner the immense health benefits that follow from maintaining good fitness levels. Blair's research shows that to move into the fitness category that offers most of the health benefits of being active, people need merely to engage in some combination of daily activities equivalent to going for a brisk half-hour walk. To move into the top fitness category requires a bit more—the daily equivalent of jogging for perhaps 25 minutes or walking briskly for close to an hour. (Our true public health scandal has nothing to do with fat and everything to do with the fact that 80 percent of the population is so inactive that it doesn't even achieve the former modest fitness standard.)

Other researchers have reached similar conclusions. For instance, the Harvard Alumni Study, which has tracked the health of Harvard graduates for many decades, has found the lowest mortality rates among those graduates who have *gained* the most weight since college while also expending at least 2,000 calories per week in physical activities. Such work suggests strongly that when obesity researchers have described the supposed health risks of fat, what they have actually been doing is using fat as a proxy—and a poor one at that—for a factor that actually does have a significant effect on health and mortality: cardiovascular and metabolic fitness. As Blair himself has put it, Americans have a "misdirected obsession with weight and weight loss. The focus is all wrong. It's fitness that is the key."

If fat is ultimately irrelevant to health, our fear of fat, unfortunately, is not. Americans' obsession with thinness feeds an institution that actually *is* a danger to Americans' health: the diet industry.

Tens of millions of Americans are trying more or less constantly to lose 20 or 30 pounds. (Recent estimates are that, on any particular day, close to half the adult population is on some sort of diet.) Most say they are doing so for their health, often on the advice of their doctors. Yet numerous studies—two dozen in the last 20 years alone—have shown that weight loss of this magnitude (and indeed even of as little as ten pounds) leads to an increased risk of premature death, sometimes by an order of several hundred percent. By contrast, over this same time frame, only a handful of studies have indicated that weight loss leads to lower mortality rates—and one of these found an eleven-hour increase in life expectancy per pound lost (i.e., less than an extra month of life in return for a 50-pound weight loss). This pattern holds true even when studies take into account "occult wasting," the weight loss that sometimes accompanies a serious but unrelated illness. For example, a major American Cancer Society study published in 1995 concluded in no uncertain terms that healthy "overweight" and "obese" women were better off if they *didn't* lose weight. In this study, healthy women who intentionally lost weight over a period of a year or longer suffered an all-cause increased risk of premature mortality that was up to 70 percent higher than that of healthy women who didn't intentionally lose weight. Meanwhile, unintentional weight gain had no effect on mortality rates. (A 1999 report based on the same data pool found similar results for men.) The only other large study that has examined the health effects of intentional weight loss, the Iowa Women's Health Study, also failed to find an association between weight loss and significantly lower mortality rates. In fact, in this 42,000-person study, "overweight" women had an all-cause mortality rate 5 to 10 percent lower than that of "ideal-weight" women.

One explanation for the ill effects of intentional weight loss is diet drugs (others include the binge eating to which chronic dieters are especially prone). The havoc wrought by drugs such as Redux and fen-phen is well-known and has resulted in billions of dollars' worth of legal liability for their manufacturers. What has been less publicized is that other diet drugs are being discovered to have similarly devastating effects: For example, a recent Yale University study indicates that women between the ages of 18 and 49 who use appetite suppressants containing phenylpropanolamine increase their risk of hemorrhagic stroke by 1,558 percent. (This over-the-counter drug was used by approximately nine million Americans at any given time during the late '90s. The Food and Drug Administration, which is in the process of formally banning the drug, has requested that in the interim manufacturers remove it from the market voluntarily.)

The grim irony lurking behind these statistics is that, as numerous studies have demonstrated, people who lose weight via dieting and diet drugs often end up weighing a good deal *more* than people of similar initial weight who never diet. The explanation for this perverse result can be found in the well-documented "set-point" phenomenon—that is, the body's tendency to fight the threat of starvation by slowing its metabolism in response to a caloric reduction. For example, obesity researcher Paul Ernsberger has done several studies in which rats are placed on very low-calorie diets. Invariably, when the rats are returned to their previous level of caloric intake, they get fat by eating exactly the same number of calories that had merely maintained their weight before they were put on diets. The same is true of human beings. "Put people on crash diets, and they'll gain back more weight than they lost," Ernsberger has said.

The literature on the health effects of dieting and diet drugs suggests that, as Gaesser pointed out, what most studies that find a correlation between higher mortality and higher body mass *really* demonstrate is a correlation between higher mortality and higher rates of dieting and diet-drug use. Under these circumstances, advising fat people to diet for the sake of their health is tantamount to prescribing a drug that causes the disease it's supposed to cure.

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What is it about fat that renders so many otherwise sensible Americans more than a little bit crazy? The war on fat is based on many things: the deeply neurotic relationship so many Americans have developed toward food and their bodies, the identification of thinness with social privilege and of fat with lower-class status, the financial interests of the diet industry, and many other factors as well. Ultimately, the fundamental forces driving our national obsession with fat fall into two broad and interrelated categories: economic interest and psychological motivation.

Obesity research in the United States is almost wholly funded by the weight-loss industry. For all the government's apparent interest in the fat "epidemic," in recent years less than 1 percent of the federal health research budget has gone toward obesity-related research. (For example, in 1995, the National Institutes of Health spent $87 million on obesity research out of a total budget of $11.3 billion.) And, while it's virtually impossible to determine just how much the dieting industry spends on such research, it is safe to say that it is many, many times more. Indeed, many of the nation's most prominent obesity researchers have direct financial stakes in companies that produce weight-loss products. (When they are quoted in the media, such researchers routinely fail to disclose their financial interests in the matters on which they are commenting, in part because journalists fail to ask them about potential conflicts.) And the contamination of supposedly disinterested research goes well beyond the effects of such direct financial interests. As Laura Fraser points out in her book *Losing It: False Hopes and Fat Profits in the Diet Industry*, "Diet and pharmaceutical companies influence every step along the way of the scientific process. They pay for the ads that keep obesity journals publishing. They underwrite medical conferences, flying physicians around the country expense-free and paying them large lecture fees to attend."

This situation creates a kind of structural distortion, analogous to that which takes place in the stock market when analysts employed by brokerage houses make recommendations to clients intended to inflate the price of stock issued by companies that in return send their business to the brokerages' investment-banking divisions. In such circumstances, it's easy for all the players to convince themselves of the purity of their motives. "It isn't diabolical," eating-disorders specialist David Garner told Fraser. "Some people are very committed to the belief that weight loss is a national health problem. It's just that, if their livelihood is based in large part on the diet industry, they can't be impartial." Fraser writes that when she asked one obesity researcher, who has criticized dieting as ineffective and psychologically damaging, to comment on the policies of one commercial weight-loss program, he replied, "What can I say? I'm a consultant for them."

What makes this structural distortion particularly insidious is that, just as Americans wanted desperately to believe that the IPO bubble of the '90s would never burst—and were therefore eager to accept whatever the experts at Merrill Lynch and on *The Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page had to say about the "New Economy"—they also long to believe that medical experts can solve the problem of their expanding waistlines. The reason for this can be summed up in six words: Americans think being fat is disgusting. That psychological truth creates an enormous incentive to give our disgust a respectable motivation. In other words, being fat must be terrible for one's health, because if it isn't that means our increasing hatred of fat represents a social, psychological, and moral problem rather than a medical one.

The convergence of economic interest and psychological motivation helps ensure that, for example, when former Surgeon General Koop raised more than $2 million from diet-industry heavyweights Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig for his Shape Up America foundation, he remained largely immune to the charge that he was exploiting a national neurosis for financial gain. After all, "everyone knows" that fat is a major health risk, so why should we find it disturbing to discover such close links between prominent former public health officials and the dietary-pharmaceutical complex?

None of this is to suggest that the war against fat is the product of some sort of conscious conspiracy on the part of those whose interests are served by it. The relationship between economic motives, cultural trends, social psychology, and the many other factors that fuel the war on fat is surely far more complex than that. But it does suggest that the conventional wisdom about fat in the United States is based on factors that have very little to do with a disinterested evaluation of the medical and scientific evidence, and therefore this conventional wisdom needs to be taken for what it is: a pervasive social myth rather than a rational judgment about risk.

So what should we do about fat in the United States? The short answer is: nothing. The longer answer is that we should refocus our attention from people's waistlines to their levels of activity. Americans *have* become far too sedentary. It sometimes seems that much of American life is organized around the principle that people should be able to go through an average day without ever actually using their legs. We *do* eat too much junk that isn't good for us because it's quick and cheap and easier than taking the time and money to prepare food that is both nutritious and satisfies our cravings.

A rational public health policy would emphasize that the keys to good health (at least those that anyone can do anything about—genetic factors remain far more important than anything else) are, in roughly descending order of importance: not to smoke, not to be an alcoholic or drug addict, not to be sedentary, and not to eat a diet packed with junk food. It's true that a more active populace that ate a healthier diet would be somewhat thinner, as would a nation that wasn't dieting obsessively. Even so, there is no reason why there shouldn't be millions of healthy, happy fat people in the United States, as there no doubt would be in a culture that maintained a rational attitude toward the fact that people will always come in all shapes and sizes, whether they live healthy lives or not. In the end, nothing could be easier than to win the war on fat: All we need to do is stop fighting it. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

About Nicholson

JACK NICHOLSON'S NEW film, **About Schmidt** (New Line), verifies again what has long been clear. Any future history of American film must, if it is to be adequate, treat Nicholson as more than a star. A box-office draw, to be sure, but unlike most stars, he has done as much in his lifetime as any American screen actor to blazon, in itself, the art of acting. It used to be a theater adage that only great roles—meaning the classics—create great actors. Nicholson has shown that, in an age when the vernacular has become prosody, a great talent can create great roles. Other Americans have done this, such as Henry Fonda, Meryl Streep, and Paul Newman, but Nicholson has so dazzlingly mixed the familiar with the electric, so wonderfully transformed individuals into archetypes, that he forces us to reconsider greatness. If that word means (as I take it to mean) acting at a height that makes superior work in that role unimaginable, then Nicholson has often reached greatness in realistic acting.

Two matters follow. He has shown as well as any actor in our history that film can, at its optimum and with some good luck, be a medium for artistic growth. And he proves that true versatility is fundamentally insight. This actor, whose sheer personality was his mode of entry into fame, proves that, through insight, the asset/burden of personality need not be a bar to surpassing that personality.

About Schmidt is certainly not his last work—another Nicholson film soon arrives—yet this film is so striking a change of venue for Nicholson that it invites a retrospect of his career. He first drew wide attention in *Easy Rider* (1969), when he was thirty-two. He had been in a number of plays in the Los Angeles area, but he was essentially a creature of the film world, having made his way up from an office-boy job at MGM through some twenty small-scale films before *Easy Rider*, as actor and writer and producer. The sight of Nicholson in *Easy Rider*, in a football helmet on the back of a motorcycle, smiling his way belatedly into adventure, was like discovering a nugget that promised a rich lode. He lost little time in staking the claim for us.

To date Nicholson has made eighty films. Out of this host I select three roles to exemplify his range. In *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), his Bobby Dupea was the tormented incarnation of an artist fleeing the strictures of art for the refuge of ordinary life. The moment in which, alone in his car, he flies into a frenzy at the thought of his obligations is still a thunderclap in memory. (And, not incidentally, in this film he and the woman from the bowling alley have one of the hottest sex scenes outside the porn trade.) As the Joker in *Batman* (1989), he transformed a commedia dell'arte clown into a writhing menace of modern nightmare. In the title role of *Hoffa* (1992), an excellent film lost in the distribution shuffle, he created the coarse labor leader, ethically murky in his own life, yet fiercely dedicated to his job—a performance that ought to be one of the many Nicholson examples available in schools of acting. (So many others. The obedient yet quizzical sailor in *The Last Detail*, the morally perplexed reporter in Antonioni's *The Passenger*, the rebellious patient in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*....)

As happens with all good actors, to remember the Nicholson gallery while watching *About Schmidt* is to feel that one is expanding one's wealth. This is the second time in a row that he has played a retiree. In last year's *The Pledge* he was a detective leaving the force but getting entangled in another case. Here he is Warren Schmidt, a retiring insurance executive who gets entangled in quite different trouble, the emptiness of his life without his job. Thoreau's most famous line—"the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation"—resounds here as Schmidt realizes that his job has been a drug to keep him from facing Thoreau's chill. In our first glimpse of him, he is seated in his stripped office on his last day, waiting for five o'clock, when he will be free. But he is not free; he is denuded. The small professional smile that he carries with him to the company party in his honor is no defense against the secret fright that drives him out of the party for a drink by himself.

The details of what then happens to Schmidt are exactly that—details. If his uncongenial wife had not suddenly died, if he had not made the long trip to his daughter's wedding where he has to face aspects of himself, other crinkles and wrinkles in dailiness might have been equally scarifying. The role does not quite provide the amplitude that Nicholson could use, yet his Schmidt, grizzled, a bit heavy, gently smiles his way into confrontation with inner bankruptcy. Through a children's aid agency he "adopts" a Tanzanian child, and for $22 per month he gets some sort of slender purpose in life. In voice-overs, he has the chance to confide to this boy the secrets he wishes he didn't have.

As has sometimes happened in the past, Nicholson's performance is the raison d'être of a less than overwhelming screenplay. Alexander Payne, the director, and Jim Taylor have adapted a Louis Begley novel (unread by me) to accommodate Nicholson. I gather that Begley's book is set in upper-class Long Island. The film moves to middle-class generality. Schmidt now lives in Omaha, Nebraska (Payne's hometown), and his new prize possession is a Winnebago motor home. Some of Payne's directing touches are sure. That opening overhead glimpse of Schmidt in his nearly vacant office is like being thrust into a chunk of emptiness. When Schmidt is at his wife's graveside service, he looks at her coffin, then glances upward. Payne then gives us not the smiling heavens but gray sky glimpsed through the bare scraggly branches of an autumn tree.

But some of the matters in the script are out of kilter. In the weeks after his wife dies, Schmidt lets his house get strewn with mess and dirty dishes. This seems a sitcom gag imposed on an extremely orderly man. His Winnebago does not get similarly messed up when he travels in it and the joke has served its turn. Schmidt's advances on a trailer-park woman, the wife of a friendly neighbor, are distressingly incredible.

Still, *About Schmidt* stands as a poignant marker in the career of a major artist. It helps to certify that Nicholson's very charm cannot obscure his eminence. At the least—and there is much more—he has here done again what he has often done before, as with the rigid colonel in *A Few Good Men* or the dissolute astronaut in *Terms of Endearment*: he has transmuted a role into a truth. ■

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The insignificance of Larry David.

The Little Things

By Lee Siegel

It is a cultural platitude that American society, over the past twenty-five years or so, has absorbed and normalized various types of behavior that would once have been considered deviant, in the precincts of sex, sexuality, dress, speech, and manners. Such a development has put the comedian, who likes to outrage convention with the frank display of underlying instincts and motives, in a tough spot. And so a challenge looms for comic artists working in an unshockable era. Now it is the frank display of unsocialized behavior—rap, talk shows, radio rants, celebrity narcissism, the "outrageous" rhetoric of some pundits and politicians—that has to be exposed for the virulent new respectability that it is. And since the comedian's tools have always been various inversions and outlandish inflations of sex, sexuality, dress, speech, and manners, he or she has to get on with the business of letting go without seeming complicitous with the weird sort of go-go pretentiousness and street boorishness that is all around us. He must be loose, but tightly.

Larry David started out in the 1970s doing stand-up in comedy clubs such as Catch a Rising Star, where if he came out on stage and did not like the audience he would stare at them deadpan, and say "fuck you," and walk off. This was a form of integrity in comedy. Back in the 1970s, when David was appearing with corrosive performers like Richard Pryor and Richard Lewis, his shtick grew organically from his edge, and his anger satisfied some people, even if he did not make them laugh.

I never saw those early routines, but I would think that David's appeal, such as it was, lay in the fact that the abrasive dis from the stage came from a struggling young performer, and the more intense his hostility, the more flagrant his helplessness. His outburst might have lacked vindicating humor, but it had the vindictive disposition out of which humor paradoxically creates its sympathetic bonds. The dis was really a cry of complicity with the audience's undiscovered feelings—it was as if David was coming out and trying to tune the room's conscious to its subconscious by hitting the low note of his own nether impulses. He was speaking down to them, but from below.

Or so it must have seemed. But it is now many years later, and David's anger has had a career. Having made it big as the co-creator of *Seinfeld*, he walked out on that sensationally successful show and moved to Los Angeles and created *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, a partly improvised series about Larry David in which the super-wealthy comedy writer plays himself, living in a luxurious house, eating at expensive restaurants, hanging with the rich and the famous, rambling around Santa Monica and Malibu and Beverly Hills, complaining, quarreling, picking fights, and sometimes actually slugging it out with people who irritate him—that is, just about everyone he meets—pausing every few minutes to nail his antagonist with a deadpan stare that says "fuck you," and occasionally actually uttering the imprecation, maybe for old time's sake.

Curb Your Enthusiasm
(HBO)

Rather than coming full circle, David has stepped from one parallel line to another. These days his edge is growing out of his shtick. The deadpan dis now comes from a wealthy and to some extent powerful man, which means that the more intense his hostility, the more flagrantly helpless his target, when the latter happens not to be also wealthy or powerful. David is speaking down to people, but from above. "There but for the grace of God go . . . you," David says to Jeff Green, his portly Sancho-esque manager and foil, after being startled to find a comedy writer he once knew down on his luck and working as a sandwich man in a deli. "Not you?" challenges Jeff. David smiles and looks down, saying quietly and confidently, "No, not me." From the Little Tramp to the Cashed-Out Champ.

There has been a lot of handwringing during the past thirty years over the way mainstream culture has appropriated the adversarial energies of the avant-garde. But comedy was a last bastion of lucid insanity: long after Rothko sold paintings to the Four Seasons, Lenny Bruce was still manically holding forth on stage. With *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, however, comedy's citadel of genuine opposition has finally been overrun, and the hilarious barbarians have been driven out by the uptight hordes. The respectable deviance created by consumerism's ever-expanding arena of appetite has devoured the comedic impulse itself. Rather than taking as his targets the Stuffed Shirt, the Self-Absorbed Sucker, and the Bully—as Chaplin once did, and the Marx Brothers, and Laurel and Hardy, and W.C. Fields, and Sid Caesar, and Woody Allen, and Bob Newhart, and Mel Brooks—David sets his sights on the little guy, the perennial target of the Stuffed Shirt, the Self-Absorbed Sucker, and the Bully. David's wit is a huge exercise in defection, a way of making the death of sympathy seem like a price worth paying for a chuckle.

David's afflictions assume many forms. *Curb Your Enthusiasm* portrays him getting exasperated by long waits at the doctor's office, and at the pharmacy, and at restaurants; by salespeople, and garage attendants, and caterers; and by things, like houses that make mysterious sounds at night, and sunglasses that he buys as a gift that are not prescription and thus are rejected by the intended recipient, and phones that won't ring when you want them to ring, and unsightly telephone wires suspended over your backyard. Hath heaven no more thunderbolts? But what really drive David into fits of animadversion are people who impede his desire for instant gratification. This would be funny if the figures in question had the power truly to do David harm; and it would be effectively humorous if the objects of David's wit were all the antihuman forces ranged against his heart and soul. But David's nemesis is usually just the service industry and all the people who work in it. *Curb Your Enthusiasm* resembles more than a little those Roman comedies in which some ineffectual slave keeps the trouble boiling. David almost never picks on someone his own size.

One episode has the programmatically poker-faced David stalked by an angry Asian American parking attendant who

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claims that he didn't give her money that he owed her; in another segment, the rich comedy writer—who, we are told, is worth $475 million, which of course is nothing to laugh at—is pursued by an enraged salesman at Barney's, who explodes against David when the two meet in the street because the latter has decided not to buy a pair of shoes that the salesman has put aside for him. Caterers steal David's food after a party at his house. Snooty maitre-d's make him homicidal by asking him to wait for a table. Airline ticket agents drive him into such despair that you would think they were Spanish border guards driving away refugees in flight from Nazi Germany. Sometimes, though, a ray of sunlight pokes through the plague of bad service: a waitress makes him laugh at her obsequious manner.

Comedy used to be about the *iron*, the ancient Greek word for the original little guy, who appeared in classical comedy puncturing the sometimes just maddening, sometimes harmful pretensions of the big guy. It set the spiritual order right by turning the social order upside down. But Larry David has returned the social order to its upright position by standing comedy on its head. For perhaps the first time in the history of the genre, he has put comedy on the side of the big guy.

It makes you wonder exactly what that young comic was angry about. The insult-humor of Pryor and to a lesser extent Lewis derived from the fact that they, especially Pryor, felt like Invisible Men, and they wanted to startle the audience out of their blindness and make them see the human being storming and ranting in front of them. From watching *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, as well as *Seinfeld*, where David expressed his rage through the sociopathic (in the bad sense) character of George Costanza, you get the impression that for David it is everybody else who is invisible. Nothing vexes him so much as the sudden visibility of another person; nothing drives him into snits of irritation so much as the slightest pressure of another ego on his own.

The thing about Invisible Men is that they internalize other people's misperceptions of them, and Pryor and Lewis ultimately were angry at Pryor and Lewis. The lacerations that they flung into the faces of the people who came to hear them were attempts at shattering those misperceptions by exploding their objects, that is, themselves. They rode their anger as far as it could go, to extinction in the case of the former, to an alcoholic breakdown and years wandering in the professional wilderness in the case of the latter. (Even poor, shrieking Sam Kinison could move his audience.) Lewis's appearances on *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, in fact, make up most of this occasionally droll show's funniest and most genuine moments, and David should get credit for placing Lewis's fine despairing anger against his own pettiness and pique. Lewis to David: "You told him I was high maintenance?! Why did you do that? It took me seven years to get my life together...."

Larry David by Zach Trenholm
for The New Republic

David's anger, by contrast, is merely the anger of frustrated entitlement. Consider his deadpan stare. It is not the deadpan of Jack Benny, for instance, which reacted to the absurdity of a situation, itself often created by a flaw—almost always the flaw of stinginess—in Jack Benny; or the inviting, conspiratorial stare of Johnny Carson, which reacted to the absurdity of a universe of headlines, of current events, or to the warm-hearted naïveté of Ed McMahon, whose genial antagonism with Carson was based on the transparently sympathetic bond between them. Larry David's deadpan is in the same line as David Letterman's (who has softened it in recent years) and Conan O'Brien's: they all react to an unresponsive audience by looking at them as if they weren't laughing not because they did not have a sense of humor, but because they did not have the knowledge to laugh. The absence of laughter denotes, for these dancing bears of knowingness, not a failure of humor in the comedian but a failure of intelligence or hipness in the audience.

But the biggest influence on David's deadpan is Jerry Seinfeld's deadpan, an impermeable expression of suburban complacency that says: "This is just too crazy to be real!" This represents an absolute inversion of the comedy of Lenny Bruce, or George Carlin, or even the tamer but still subtly subversive Robert Klein, the guiding sentiment of all of whom was: "This is too alarmingly real to be replenishingly crazy!" Seinfeld's look was the smugly defensive posture of teenagers from some affluent Long Island town—Massapequa, to be exact—in Manhattan for the first time, putting down as abnormal or stupid everything that went beyond what they knew at home. The ideology of Manhattan that you encounter in shows such as *Sex and the City* and *Friends* was indeed concocted by people more anxious about the city than at home in it.

David has perfected Seinfeld's superior, uninviting stare into a cold, cruel sneer. The reason that so many people like it is that they want it to like them. David's gleaming bald head, his hard, sloping Joe Camel nose, his long face that curves

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in and away from you: all these features are less like the elements of a mortal physiognomy than like a blunt weapon. He is the anti-nebbish whose worst pratfalls will end with him going home to his multimillion-dollar house or to his next power lunch. Even his glasses—whose wire frames are barely visible, thus making his eyes look not vulnerable and lensed but plated with some hard substance—are the antithesis of Woody Allen's large black pathetic frames, often askew on his face, just waiting to be snatched away by some cold, cruel hand.

On one level, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* provides catharsis for a middle-class society which lives as though it were an affluent society, which is drowning in things, and whose perpetually stimulated appetite is constantly outraged by phenomena that delay satisfaction for anywhere from twenty minutes to indefinitely. Not to mention the therapeutic justification that the show offers to selves whose prosperous, self-sufficient isolation has less and less need of other people as its sense of prosperity and self-sufficiency grows larger and larger. And I suppose that the show's allegedly anhedonic protagonist, who seems so miserable with all his money, offers some kind of banal commentary on the powerlessness of money to make us happy, etc.

But Larry David is not miserable; he is annoyed. He is not anhedonic; he takes infinite pleasure in himself. The star of this universe of tony things is himself a tony thing. And he is a thing whose every situation consists of his entanglement with other things. The episodes all have to do with the way inconvenience keeps spoiling a life of placid privilege and possession. The worst event that befalls David is the loss of something: his eyeglasses, his plane tickets, his notebook, his bowling shoes, his take-out Chinese dinner, his wife's prescription. It is not commercialism that gets in the way of his humanity. It is other people's humanity that gets in the way of his acquisitive appetite. This is a very small predicament. The "wisdom" of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* is said to consist in the understanding that life is made up of little things, and that little things are big things; but little things are usually just little things, and a life that is made up only of little things is just a little life. Maybe being trapped in a little life is why Larry David reflexively despises the little guy. As for this big guy, his biggest accomplishment is that he has banished largeness from laughter. ■

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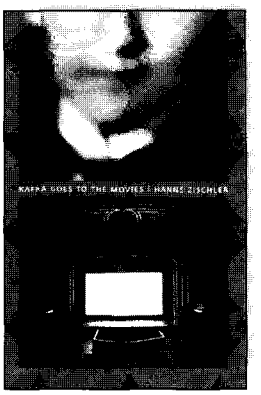

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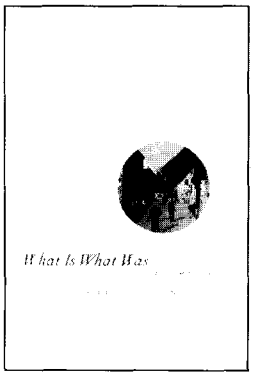

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The Adjuster

By DAVID BROMWICH

American Studies by Louis Menand

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 306 pp., $25)

LOUIS MENAND HAS been publishing reviews and essays for about twenty years. He writes on most things a non-specialist could write on: novels, movies, television, magazines, politics, education, manners, celebrity culture. His academic training was in literature, but academically most of what he does would now be classified as cultural history; his book on the American pragmatists, *The Metaphysical Club*, was an ambitious and rewarding contribution to that genre. He brings to his pieces a large share of general information, prose decorum, and an accent of overwhelming sobriety, sometimes nicely, sometimes oddly varied by facetious asides. For those of us who have been following him on and off, the puzzle has been to decide what exactly he cares about.

On arriving at the end of one of Menand's pieces, you commonly think: how ably done. The subject has been closed. You are less excited than you were before. The absence of extreme opinions in Menand's work is reassuring, but it is also, when the articles are presented in bulk, rather baffling. A critic, like a reader or a spectator, is allowed to go over the top in wonder and delight, or, if he is a good hater, to make us laugh out loud. Even daily reviewers often exhibit a ruling passion or a driving enthusiasm. It has not been clear what Menand's is.

American Studies leads off with three classics: William James, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., and T.S. Eliot. It ends with two contemporary profiles: one of a politician, Al Gore, and one of an artist, Maya Lin. The offerings that come between are very miscellaneous. There are essays on Richard Wright, Norman Mailer, and Christopher Lasch, all of whom might be roughly described as social critics; essay-reviews on *The New Yorker* and *Rolling Stone*; review-profiles of two famous administrators of the 1950s, James B. Conant and William S. Paley, and of Pauline Kael and Larry Flynt and Laurie Anderson. It is easier to describe the method than to characterize the taste that unifies these articles. Menand approaches his subjects with judiciousness and moderation; and he addresses not so much people as institutions. There are famous people who have become institutions, and he deals with them on that basis. Then again, some institutions seem to have an aggregate "character," and these Menand treats as sentimentally or ruefully as if they were persons. Richard Wright is made to represent the place of black experience in American letters. Pauline Kael is seen to have cultivated the pop consciousness of intellectuals—too assiduously, says Menand, but she had something to teach if you knew when to stop. Norman Mailer is a superannuated prophet who has failed to recognize that prophecy today is an outmoded form. Maya Lin, in the most laudatory of these articles, comes across as a young artist of pure intent, surrounded by the inevitable controversies. William S. Paley stands for network television in the period of its ascendancy. And *The New Yorker*? An institution to be regarded with great tenderness.

The opening essay on William James does not quite come off. It is trying to do two separate things at once: to solve a biographical problem about whether the crucial revelation of James's life came from something he suffered or something he read; and to introduce the general reader to the appeal of James as a person and a thinker. Menand has written better about James elsewhere. The most satisfactory pieces here, it seems to me, are those on Holmes, Eliot, and Flynt. Menand quotes enough from Holmes's writings and opinions to capture the charm of the man, and it is plain that he admires both a positive and a negative quality in Holmes: his civic good sense and his utter lack of idealism. (In Menand's account, these traits come to seem practically identical, though they need not be.) The review-essay on Eliot deals with anti-Semitism, and was prompted by Anthony Julius's book *T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form*. Menand stops short of the literary problem and shuns all speculation on the commerce between prejudice and imagination in Eliot. The article, re-framed here in the past tense, may understate its debt to Julius's book; but it is informed by Menand's own research as well, and adds up to a strong documentary statement of the case against Eliot. Flynt is an easier target in most ways, and there are critics who could have done the job with more gusto. Still, Menand makes pleasant work of narrating the details of Flynt's bad faith. He is suitably unimpressed by the merchant of degradation who became a martyr for liberty and ended up suffering very little.

IT IS POSSIBLE that being suitably unimpressed comes too easily to Menand. An article on the Beatles as copycats of American rock 'n' roll—not reprinted in *American Studies*—was an aggravated instance of the tendency. In a doubtfully relevant detail of his essay on Mailer, he quotes a gush by Madonna about how much she wants to treat human beings with compassion, and appends his own comment: "Crazy, man." A mock. But why, when you are writing about something else, quote Madonna on the subject of anything? The argument would be trimmer without the quotation and without the mock. Yet Menand is naturally a damperer-down, his sentences occasionally seeming to turn that way of their own volition. The pieces on Conant and Paley, important administrators, must have been depressing to write, and are certainly depressing to read. Menand has a pronounced interest in the kind of men who run the machine of society; yet, seen close up, many of these men turn out to be dull people, fretted by the predictable vices: greed, disloyalty, narcissism, a closed circuit of self-deception. He pays his dues to their importance by writing at length about their careers. He takes his revenge from the sidelines in a form of jeering half-reproach that defies summary: "Conant never seems to have doubted that the destruction, without warning, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was the wisest thing to do."

The Conant and Paley articles both go into the subsequent development of the institutions that these men created. For Paley, we are offered a lighthearted sketch of what it has been like to watch television, from the age of the networks

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to the coming of UHF to the freedom of the remote-control channel changer. A graver treatment is called for with Conant's advocacy of the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the idea of merit in higher education. And here Menand glosses over the difficult question: is there something morally valuable about the idea of inward merit—merit that relates to the ability of a student and not to the "representative" status of that student in a social group? He suggests that the educational problem has been solved by changing demographics. As the ethnic background of students shifted, he says, and "different kinds" of people came into the classrooms, the meritocratic ideal came to seem increasingly unreal in its abstractness. "It took academic humanities departments more than twenty years to sort out the consequences." Now, he implies, the consequences are sorted out. The truth is that they have not been sorted out. Such problems do not sort out or "shake out" by themselves. Menand's way of settling the question rhetorically is reassuring, but it will be impressive only to people far from the scene.

FULL-SCALE CONSIDERATIONS of three careers—those of Norman Mailer, Pauline Kael, and Christopher Lasch—go beyond the scope of the other reviews. The piece on Mailer is the least deferential of these but also the most generous. Menand was reviewing an anthology that selects from four decades of writing: he had the chance here to introduce a new generation of readers to a large and confusing talent. Between 1948 and 1975 or so, Mailer was a conspicuous and independent figure, a novelist and a journalist associated with radical politics, underground culture, the dangerous edge of things. Since 1975, he has been a best-selling bookmaker. He said in an interview twenty years ago that it was strange to have become the sort of writer he despised when he was a young man. Menand, whether perversely or obtusely, does not remark the split in the career.

He singles out for admiration a late book, Mailer's first commercial collaboration with Lawrence Schiller, *The Executioner's Song*: a detailed account of the life, crimes, and punishment of the convicted murderer Gary Gilmore. The book is written in a constrained manner, in short uncomplicated sentences, and it gives an impression of the writer trying to excavate the contents of minds that he takes to be simpler than his own yet quite opaque. Mailer was writing against the grain, and if one cared for much of his earlier writing it was hard to care for *The Executioner's Song*. Even so, Menand's praise of the work is supported by a long quotation and apt commentary. He does not directly confront the bargain by which Mailer gained access to the letters and interviews of the characters, saying only that it "raises the ethical stakes of reading"—which must mean that though the practice calls into question the writer's ethics, this can be treated as an ethical *discovery* by the writer. The article closes by asserting that Nicole, Gilmore's girlfriend, is the novelist's "greatest creation." But this is cant. She was not his creation but an actual person, a piece of life that Mailer re-created with a lot of help from her words.

Concerning the first half of Mailer's career, the more interesting part for many of us, Menand is informative and carefully ironic. *Barbary Shore* and *An American Dream*, disasters for Mailer because of their poor reception, have real wildness and are still readable, but Menand says almost nothing about them. The political journalism, of which there is far more than most people know—including books on the 1968 and 1972 campaigns—shows an alertness in portraiture and analysis that no other American working in this mode has ever touched. Even a book like *The Fight*, about the Muhammad Ali–George Foreman "rumble in the jungle," has a kinetic relish of detail that you cannot find in other accounts of Ali. Yet throughout his own survey Menand implies a high general opinion of Mailer while minimizing the individual grounds for it. He makes fun of Mailer's interest in sex—so passé—and isolates the first of the political pieces, "Superman Comes to the Supermarket," for its entrepreneurial fusion of methods. He speaks of the "sour brilliance" of *The Armies of the Night*—a strange choice of phrase for a book so high-spirited.

Finally, the attempt to be generous here is pestered by the need to place Mailer in his "context," a task that becomes identical with putting him in his place. We are told that "he is a man—in 2002, he is possibly the last man—of the 1950s." A put-down of obscure import, for it turns out that he was also a man of the 1960s: "For most of the sixties, Mailer was one of the things that was permitted, since anyone who seemed sufficiently far out held an appeal" (not true, by the way). In the year 1970, Mailer, still a creature of his time, "ran into a wall. This was feminism." The explanation of Mailer's encounter with 1970s feminism is rudimentary. At last, the fame thermometer brings us up to the present moment: "Even Mailer cannot be obscene any longer. Everyone has heard it all." It is not claimed that this is Mailer's fault. But has the change of mores depressed the value of his work? On what market, exactly? Chaucer, Rochester, Byron, Lawrence, Wilfred Owen—none of these writers, either, can be obscene any longer. To say so is to say nothing intelligent about them. The fact that a writer may be called "of his moment" has no critical significance whatever. And yet if you were to deprive Menand of this resource—the measure of timeliness—you would take a tremendous cut from his mileage.

A BROADER POINT is at stake about what is involved in critical judgment. Menand believes himself to be dispassionate, and believes that this is the proper state of mind for a critic. One ought to look at the times from outside and just slightly above. So, for example, in his review of *Rolling Stone* he remarks that the 1960s "could use the attention of some people who really don't care." I would have thought that the 1960s, like any other promising subject, could use the attention of some people who care and are honest and inquisitive. He goes further in the preface to *American Studies*, which gives his critical philosophy. The darkest Nietzschean truths are uttered here with so bored an air that you wonder what all the fuss could have been about.

"In the end," Menand writes, "the only way to make the past usable is to misinterpret it, which means, strictly speaking, to lose it." He calls the method for attaining this use-value "historicizing," and his essays, he says, "are exercises in historical criticism." Not all his readers will know that historicism has long been the dominant "ism" in the field of American studies; but for Menand to speak, as he does, of a personal "commitment to historicizing" seems a fancy way of putting it. Like other responsible reviewers, he gives the background and sets the scene, and tells you what is in a book, and makes a judgment. The suspension of judgment (especially of positive judgment) is a detail that he sets much store by. "The last word—though only the last word—should be one of appreciation." Why only the last word? One must be so careful these days.

Possibly he overrates the need for precautions. I am thinking of reviews by Max Beerbohm of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, by Randall Jarrell of *Lord Weary's Castle*, by Virginia Woolf of *South Wind*, by Manny Farber of the films of Howard Hawks.

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All these reviews are appreciation through and through, not just the last word, and they seem to me wonderful work. Does Menand know something that these earlier reviewer-critics did not know? To "cast a cold eye," he continues his preface—applying Yeats's epitaph to himself—is "possibly too stern a directive"; but "a cool eye," he thinks, "is desirable." Here, then, is the trouble. All those critics who did not confine appreciation to the last word—they were not trying to be cool, or not trying hard enough. But was that so very wrong? Menand, who dislikes all idiosyncrasy and whose commonest challenge is a breezy "come off it," may not recognize that his engine idles lower than some people's. Nobody is to blame for that—not him, not them—whatever the cool eye may say.

IT IS HARD to think of another critic who has made such a virtue out of not having strong reactions. Menand's opposite in this respect is Pauline Kael, and so, halfway through the book, one approaches with interest his essay on her career. But this proves to be another demonstration of almost impersonal balance. This article begins with, and finds much cultural importance in, the appointment of Kael as film critic at *The New Yorker*. Menand acknowledges that she had a solid reputation before that. She had published a good book of essays and written most of another and appeared in many academic journals and commercial magazines. But the convergence of Kael and *The New Yorker* is, for him, enormously consequential, and he devotes three paragraphs to it, space that another kind of critic would have used to argue with her opinions of Welles or Bertolucci.

Menand dislikes Kael's prolixity and her puffing, and he cites enough examples to bring them back to mind, but just as palpably he distrusts her enthusiasm, calling her appreciation of Cary Grant "swoony." For the rest, he writes less of his own than of a generation's response to Kael. "You" felt this and "you" felt that about Kael's work—a usage that is frequent with him, intimate, buttonholing, gently coercive. "She was the ideal person to read when you had seen a movie and couldn't make up your mind what you thought about it." But Menand is more engaging on the reasons for getting tired of her later work than on the reasons for admiring her early work. Incidentally, his article never mentions Penelope Gilliatt, Kael's precursor at *The New Yorker*, and a subtler writer who profited from having a less worked-on set of prejudices.

The article on Christopher Lasch is intellectually the most demanding piece in *American Studies*: a deliberate and in the end quite unsympathetic review of Lasch's *The True and Only Heaven*. The objections that Menand raises have to do with the defects of the book as a work of synthesis and its suspicion that American society is going through a crisis of faith. An underlying and unstated objection is that Lasch has feelings about ideas. To Menand, this seems pointless. He cannot fathom why Lasch in his last book would want to draw inspiration from a critic of capitalism as out-of-the-way as William Cobbett. In passing, he says of *The Culture of Narcissism* that it was "a book of its moment"—the same prudent investor's "sell-by" notation to which he has subjected Mailer's work decade by decade. But the moment did not write the book; a scholar named Christopher Lasch did. After other scholars and journalists had written other books about the culture of narcissism, the idea may have seemed common. That is the thing about an original idea: it is obvious after someone says it.

Lasch, whatever you make of the result, was consistent in his response to American society in the 1970s and 1980s. He did not celebrate the weakening of the family, which seemed to him a symptom and a cause of the weakening of the self, and he did not see the "creative destruction" of advanced capitalism as mainly creative. He was, by then, a man of neither the left nor the right. He saw a corruption, an evasion of self-knowledge, in this society's fascination with technology and its submission to be dominated by commerce. Menand, for his part, manages the considerable feat of expounding Lasch, Mailer, and Richard Wright while scarcely employing such words as "left-wing" and "establishment." These writers were critics of conformity, but conformity is an idea Menand can do nothing with.

ABOUT *THE NEW YORKER* Menand writes with a glow. "If you grew up in a household in which *The New Yorker* was a constant presence, you probably retain, whatever reservations your superior sophistication now requires you to make, a residual fondness for the magazine's cultural traditions." He goes on to describe the magazine's older readers in a manner that is heartfelt and deeply flattering. "Their taste," says Menand, was "their great virtue, really," and this taste favored "the self-effacing, the unpretentious, the literate and witty." He loves these people:

> They were secure enough to enjoy poking fun at themselves and their world; that was part of the nobility of their sense of humor.... But they were genuinely insecure enough to require assurance that they would not be "out-browed"—that they would find their cultural experiences accessible and unthreatening, without being flavorless or incurious or prudish.

These are Menand's readers, of course, as he imagines them, and his perception of their needs explains much else about his writing.

The curiously timed jokiness, for instance. To say of a celebrity who mouths a humanitarian platitude "Crazy, man"; or, of television in the 1950s, "in a way, the banality of network television was the best thing about it"; or again, that the 1960s "could use the attention of some people who really don't care"—these gestures are meant to confirm the noble sense of humor of readers who "require assurance" and who want to "find their cultural experiences accessible and unthreatening." Later in the same piece Menand defends some recent changes at the magazine by remarking that we are all complicit in the culture of advertising: "Everyone participates in this system, and partakes of its benefits (individual economic opportunity and national economic expansion) and puts up with its drawbacks (cheap goods, an often banal and sometimes exploitative popular culture, financial uncertainty)." We are all in it together. Very little surprises him; and not to be surprised is not to be disturbed. "Among today's upper-middle-class professionals," he concludes, "the separation between culture and commerce has collapsed." This marks a difference between *The New Yorker* in, say, 1965 and the same magazine today—a difference that Menand neither celebrates nor deplores. The old style was "Something odd struck us the other day." The new style is "But, hey." He does both voices.

A pair of *New Yorker* profiles close the book. The sketch of Al Gore is a cautious full-length portrait, an ad hoc skimming of surfaces by a journalist who lacks a first-rate interest in politics. One is conscious here of the reporter's presence, and a lot seems to hang on an interview. Menand correctly sizes up Gore as someone squarer than himself but just as smart. What to do? The piece settles for an agreeable mixture of pert satire and discreet panegyric. The profile of Maya Lin is more promising and more disappointing. Menand has not been, and does not seem inclined to become, a finder of new

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talents, but Lin was not in need of being discovered and he was free to ask and think whatever he liked. Yet this article declines every opportunity of historical survey and description. We are not told what her lesser-known works look like. Though the writing is managed in the newer manner, with first-person glimpses of Menand watching Lin drink tea in a café on Broome Street, he opts for the impersonal decorum where it is no longer required. Lin herself has written thoughtfully about her debt to Sir Edwin Lutyens's World War I memorial. One might suppose her to be, on other evidence too, a person who has feelings about ideas. Yet Menand does not stand in front of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and tell us what he thinks of what he sees.

THE TITLE AND narrative design of *The Metaphysical Club* suggested that ideas are reducible to a setting, a group of people, a large- or small-scale club. And yet, when the lively texture of biography and anecdote in that book had to yield some account of ideas themselves, the payoff was frequently bland: "Kant had a more generous view of the mind than Locke, but he did not think of himself as superseding Locke's theory, only as correcting for a few inadequacies." An assessment like that comes out of the same wish to comfort and assure that one finds in the essays on Wright, Mailer, and Lasch. The idea of a radical break in thought is alien to Menand. The leveling of distinctions also serves as an intellectual labor-saving device. Nothing is very new; nothing, maybe, ever was; nothing matters as much as you think it matters. Menand came to believe that the pragmatists had learned from the Civil War that ideals are dangerous because people may want to die for them. I have lately re-read William James's oration on St. Gaudens's monument to Colonel Shaw and the Massachusetts 54th, and that is not what I take it to be saying. But one's reservations go beyond a difference about a thinker or a movement of thought. To treat ideas and works of art as conveniences, psychic degradables, products of a past climate that require of us mainly that we correct for a few inadequacies, is to speak as a consumer in the realm of art and ideas.

This brings us back, in a way, to the preface to *American Studies*. For at the very end of his credo Menand shares a thought about the relation between the present and the past. "My own capacity," he says, "for adjusting to change is no better than anyone else's." On the evidence of the book, that is false—no smiles, no tears, is the constant refrain; pass on, pass on. Does he now deplore the necessity of his own posture? "We want," he adds, "to play with yesterday's cards, but yesterday has already unraveled past reconstructing." Why, then, make such a point of honor about historicizing? But his final sentence puts every doubt to rest. "Today is the only day we have." I have looked into this sentence, around it, and under it, sniffed at it, shaken it to spring a false bottom, tickled it to see if I could make it sneeze, but not even its whiskers budge. "Today is the only day we have." Well, let us get serious very fast, and close this quickly, since today is the only day we have. Seize the day, cherish the day, love the one you're with, this is no ordinary love, and OK, all right, but, finally, no. Our yesterdays trail after, and perfect forgetting is no more conceivable than life without hope or regret. Besides, today could last a long time. If you are still playing cards in the afternoon, you may want to remember the hand you were dealt in the morning. Menand has allowed for that contingency, too. He has re-written all his reviews in the past tense. The parachute is now built into the grammar. This is very much a book of its moment. ■

Poor Richard, Rich Ben

By ALAN TAYLOR

Benjamin Franklin by Edmund S. Morgan

(Yale University Press, 340 pp., $24.95)

AT AGE EIGHTY-SIX, the distinguished American historian Edmund S. Morgan appears in print with *Benjamin Franklin*, a popular biography that may well be the last hurrah of an extraordinarily long and productive career. Trained at Harvard, first employed at Brown, and long a fixture at Yale, Morgan represents the best of the Ivy League tradition of master historians who gave intellectual weight to American nationalism. He shaped the academic field of early American history by his numerous and talented graduate students, as well as by a publishing career that began in the 1940s. Ramifying Morgan's influence into new generations, his many accomplished protégés include T. H. Breen, David D. Hall, Christine Heyrman, Robert Middlekauff, and John Murrin.

Reversing the chain of influence to its origins, we begin at Harvard during the early 1940s, where Morgan studied with two great historians of colonial America: Samuel Eliot Morison and Perry Miller. The consummate narrative historian, Morison taught Morgan to spin stories in taut yet evocative language, creating vivid images of place and personality without a wasted word. A profound intellectual historian, Miller shared his respect for ideas as coherent and powerful imperatives to human behavior—an approach that challenged the era's Progressive historians, who built careers on debunking ideas as gloss to the self-interest that drove the past's social and economic conflicts.

Miller and Morison together conveyed their dual (and interdependent) interests in seventeenth-century New England and the later American Revolution; in the Puritan founders of New England and in the Founding Fathers who conceived and led the Revolution. In the Brahmin tradition of Harvard, they regarded New England's origins as essential to the subsequent founding of the United States: yoked together as the two great generations of early American history. For all their differences, the Calvinist leaders of New England and the republican ideologues of the Revolution were the great minds worth knowing to discern the essence of American history.

The Harvard formula focused on elites, favoring religious and intellectual history for the early seventeenth century and political and intellectual history for the later eighteenth century. That formula neglected the intervening century and the vast reaches of colonial America beyond New England, treating both as stagnant

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backwaters. The formula also tended to dismiss social history—the conditions and the patterns of common life—as best left to the occasional woman who infiltrated academia. And only less ambitious scholars should attend to Virginia (before the Revolution) or the Middle Colonies (at any time), for there they would find infertile minds: the mules of American origins. Initially committed to that framework, Morgan emulated his mentors by studying and then narrating, at first in sequence and later in alternation, New England's Puritans and revolutionary statesmen.

During his first three decades as a scholar, Morgan balanced academic tradition with a cautious receptivity to the new. He was modest rather than flamboyant, careful instead of bold, measured rather than impassioned, accessible instead of demanding, ironic rather than ideological: the consummate historical craftsman of his generation, the master of tight and clear writing, precise and consistent argument, a rational tone, exemplary productivity, and safe subjects that led to reassuring conclusions. For thirty years Morgan gently stretched the framework that he had learned at Harvard, determined to improve rather than to shatter its priorities and its conclusions. Until 1975, that is, when he published his provocative masterpiece, *American Slavery, American Freedom*.

Morgan began in 1944 with the Puritans, humanizing them with a measure of social history in *The Puritan Family: Essays on Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England*. As befit a doctoral dissertation, the book extended a theme dear to Morgan's mentor, exploring how Puritan families applied the covenant theology that Perry Miller had so brilliantly systematized. But while Miller depicted the Puritans as powerful minds confronting terrible existential truths, Morgan found loving men and women living within a daunting faith. Morgan would return to such reasonable Puritans in 1958 in *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop*, a biography of the pre-eminent founder of colonial Massachusetts, and again in 1963 in *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, a study of the Puritan attempts to balance religious passion and individualism with the stable institutions of church and family needed to replicate their culture through the generations. In both books, Morgan challenged the reigning stereotypes of the Puritans as repressed and repressive, dark-clad and dark-spirited killers of witches, oppressors of Quakers, and persecutors of Hester Prynne. Morgan's Puritans were much like Morgan: reasonable and moderate in all things.

Jean-Baptiste Greuze,
Portrait of Benjamin Franklin, 1777

At the same time Morgan proved his mettle as a historian of the American Revolution, beginning with *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution*, which appeared in 1953 and was written with his wife, Helen M. Morgan. Joining the winning side in a historiographical debate, Morgan espoused the "consensus interpretation" of American history, which belabored the fading "Progressive interpretation." To explain the coming of the Revolution, the Progressive stalwarts Carl Becker and Charles Beard had emphasized the clash of economic and political interests between the common working people and the moneyed and privileged elite of colonial America. Democratic and egalitarian aspirations drove the common people to challenge both the British overlords and their minions in the colonial elite, and that pressure split the elite into Loyalists, who opposed the challenge, and moderate Whigs, who were determined to control it. In Becker's famous formula, the Revolution was fought as much over who would rule at home as over home rule. Impatient with political rhetoric, the Progressives sought reality behind the lofty words of revolutionary leaders, exposing their opportunism and inconsistency in the polemical exchanges with British officials and Loyalists that led up to the Revolution. Finally, the Progressive historians regarded the Federal Constitution of 1787 as a conservative reaction against the democratic revolution expressed in 1776 by the Declaration of Independence.

Framed earlier in the century, the Progressive interpretation seemed unsettling to the Cold War culture of the 1950s, which sought a more reassuring and unifying past in which Americans shared core values that protected property, cherished stability, and avoided conflict. Morgan and his fellow "consensus historians" celebrated the ideas of the revolutionaries and smoothed over their internal conflicts and their intellectual contradictions, finding a continuum from the resistance against Britain to the Declaration of Independence, and from the Revolution to the Constitution. Re-examining the Stamp Act debates of the mid-1760s, Morgan concluded that the colonial leaders consistently espoused principles that united them against British taxation. In particular, they spoke of their natural rights to pay no tax unless it was levied by their own representatives. When the empire refused to compromise, revolution became inevitable, unifying, and limited.

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Morgan extended that argument to the entire era in a concise and elegant synthesis, *The Birth of the Republic* (1956), which celebrated the Constitution as the embodiment and fulfillment of the cautious and principled revolution begun in the 1760s.

THE CONSENSUS HISTORIAN Morgan risked trapping himself in a past of humane Puritans and cautious revolutionaries during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when historical fashion changed. Younger radical scholars hoped to reform and to revitalize the Progressive approach, because consensus history seemed willfully myopic and was unable to explain the sources of American inequality, racism, and militarism. In 1975, however, Morgan surprised many of his own generation by embracing the new history, producing its boldest and most profound work on colonial America. He did so by astutely shifting the central problem away from class conflict, which had preoccupied the Progressives, to a new focus on race relations. Nothing in Morgan's previous work prepared readers for the passionate engagement and the simmering outrage that was manifest in *American Slavery, American Freedom*.

Turning away from his conventional engagement with New England, Morgan re-examined relatively neglected colonial Virginia. There he found the wrenching crucible of America's paradoxical political culture, where liberty for whites depended upon slavery for African Americans and upon the systematic dispossession of native peoples. Morgan argued that the leaders of the American Revolution "had inherited both their slaves and their attachment to freedom from an earlier generation, and they knew that the two were not unconnected. The rise of liberty and equality in America had been accompanied by the rise of slavery."

In seventeenth-century Virginia, colonists and their reluctant Indian hosts died by the thousands of hunger, disease, and genocidal war. The colonial victors created a ruthless tobacco economy that imported and exploited thousands of English laborers as indentured servants. After five to seven years of hard labor in the tobacco fields, the survivors obtained freedom, some tools, and a small farm. But social mobility proved to be elusive, as the former servants (now freedmen) felt oppressed by heavy taxes and restricted to marginal lands, where they competed violently with the Indians. Malcontents blamed the colony's corrupt and arbitrary governor, William Berkeley, who profited from their taxes, large land grants to his cronies, and a monopoly over the profitable fur trade with the Indians. In 1676, the frustrated freedmen rallied around an ambitious and wealthy opportunist, Nathaniel Bacon, to exterminate Indians and to oust the governor and burn Jamestown, his capital.

Bacon's sudden death by disease invited Berkeley's triumphant and vindictive return, in which he executed twenty-three rebels as he restored order. But, sobered by the rebellion, the colony's planter elite re-evaluated its exploitation of the white commoners, lowering their taxes, enhancing their political voice, and increasing their access to good farmland, at the Indians' expense. To maintain their political ascendancy, the great planters needed to lead, rather than to oppose, wars to dispossess and destroy frontier Indians. Such wars united the free whites by providing convenient, external, and alien scapegoats for internal frustrations and inequalities. In 1720 Governor Alexander Spotswood commented that "a Governour of Virginia has to steer between Scylla and Charybdis, either an Indian or a Civil War.... Bacon's Rebellion was occasioned purely by the Governour and Council refusing to let the People go out against the Indians who at that time annoyed the Frontier."

AT THE END of the seventeenth century, the planter elite also benefited from a transition in the labor system away from indentured servants to enslaved Africans, imported by the thousands. From a mere 300 in 1650, slaves surged to 150,000 (40 percent of the colony's total population) by 1750. The planters shifted from servants to slaves for economic reasons, but that change incidentally improved their security against another freedman's rebellion. More slaves meant fewer servants, which meant fewer new freedmen who might stew in their frustration and rally to another rebel commander. Bacon's Rebellion did not cause the switch from servants to slaves, but the shift did discourage poor whites from rebelling again.

Indeed, by shifting to African slaves, the great planters found yet another reason to cultivate the common men. Instead of a threat to social order, the armed whites of common status became essential to its defense against slave rebellion. Morgan concluded: "Thus by the second quarter of the eighteenth century, Virginians had established the conditions for the mixture of slavery and freedom that was to prevail for at least another century: a slave labor force isolated from the rest of society by race and racism; a body of large planters ... who had become practiced in politics

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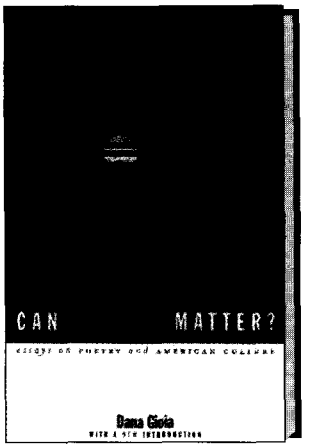

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and political maneuvering; and a larger body of small planters who had been persuaded that their interests were well served by the leadership of their big neighbors." Comfortable in their popularity with common whites, the great slaveholders of Virginia—Jefferson, Madison, and Washington—led the American Revolution to secure national independence and republican government. At our national origins, freedom for whites depended upon a system of slavery for blacks.

OTHER HISTORIANS HAD linked American freedom to American slavery, but none had established this connection with such thorough research and such careful attention to detail and nuance over three centuries from Elizabethan England to the Jeffersonian republic. Morgan also perfectly balanced rhetorical restraint with moral purpose, producing the twentieth century's best historical work on American origins. Needless to say, Morgan found *American Slavery, American Freedom* a tough act to follow.

A dozen years of minor projects and revised editions elapsed before Morgan produced his next substantial and original book, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America*, which appeared in 1988. Written during the disenchanting Reagan presidency, *Inventing the People* expresses an ironic detachment toward American democracy—a descent from the passionate engagement manifest in *American Slavery, American Freedom*. Ever discreet and professional, Morgan never discusses contemporary politics, but the presidency of a former actor seems to lurk behind his premise that "government requires make believe." All systems of effective government, even purported democracies, are fundamentally oligarchies that employ collective "fictions" to secure credulity and allegiance from the voting masses. "In a sense," Morgan argues, "representation had always been a fiction designed to secure popular consent to a governing aristocracy." Jefferson taught us to say "all men are created equal" as a "self-evident truth" beyond challenge—despite the yawning gap with our reality of great and growing economic inequality in a corrupt polity where only multimillionaires and their friends can afford high office. But Morgan finds a silver lining: "a fiction must bear some resemblance to fact." Occasionally and conspicuously, the fiction of democracy does "restrain the few for the benefit of the many."

Inventing the People painstakingly documents the gradual creation of our dominant fiction—popular sovereignty—from the ruins of its predecessor, the fiction of the divine right of English kings. Learned and repetitive, the book seems longer than its three hundred or so pages. Lacking the vivid personalities and episodes that humanized and dramatized Morgan's previous books, *Inventing the People* leaves most readers cold: impressed by the author's expertise but unmoved by his interpretation, which more clearly reveals how democratic fiction perpetuates the ruling few than how it benefits the ruled many.

NOW MORGAN RETURNS with an original book written in a more accessible and popular vein, a biography of Benjamin Franklin, the most avuncular and versatile of the men who led and consolidated the American Revolution. Given the recent commercial success of Joseph Ellis's *Founding Brothers* and David McCullough's *John Adams*, Morgan can count on the revived cult of the Founding Fathers: the eagerness of many readers (mostly men) to find fonts of original wisdom that might redeem our lapsed political culture. Rarely has a historian had such a golden opportunity to reach such a large audience. Unfortunately, Morgan has little to say about Franklin that is new or challenging.

In Franklin, Morgan has a truly great subject. A self-educated polymath endowed with formidable charm and genius, Franklin became the leading figure in colonial politics, literature, science, and social reform. Born in 1706 into the modest circumstances of a candlemaker's family in the stagnating seaport of Boston, Franklin bolted early from his indenture as apprentice to his brother's newspaper. With impeccable timing, he moved to Philadelphia, just then becoming the most dynamic seaport city in the colonies. By hard work, formidable abilities, and useful friends, Franklin developed a lucrative newspaper and an almanac that mixed wit and moralism, no easy combination. Above all, Franklin became the first self-made man as celebrity—a still powerful and pivotal type in our culture.

Once enriched, Franklin gradually retired from business, entrusting his press to a junior partner. Freed from daily commerce, he re-made himself as a public-spirited gentleman. Franklin accumulated wealth to pursue fame, status, and influence—all the while doing good deeds for his common neighbors. During the 1730s and 1740s, Franklin helped to found and to lead an array of cultural and philanthropic institutions: the Library Company, the American Philosophical Society, the Philadelphia Academy (which later became the University of Pennsylvania), and a network of volunteer fire companies. Within the British empire, these institutions rendered Philadelphia third only to London and Edinburgh in intellectual activity. Franklin also conducted scientific experiments, primarily with electricity, demonstrating that it comprised lightning and could be harnessed to electrocute chickens and turkeys. Published in London and Paris, his scientific reports dazzled European intellectuals, making Franklin more famous than any other British colonist. A utilitarian at heart, Franklin also applied science to craft inventions meant to improve common life: a lighting rod to protect buildings and a stove to heat them. "Franklin took pleasure," Morgan explains, "in making daily life better for himself and everyone around him."

AS A PUBLIC-SPIRITED gentleman, Franklin plunged into politics, becoming Pennsylvania's pre-eminent politician. By energizing the Pennsylvania assembly, Franklin antagonized Thomas Penn, the colony's English proprietor and the choleric son of the saintly founder William Penn. Determined to preserve his vast landholdings from assembly taxation, Thomas Penn directed his appointed governor to veto tax bills that funded frontier defenses. The assembly sent Franklin to London to lobby Penn. When that failed, Franklin lingered, pressing the imperial bureaucracy to re-possess Pennsylvania as a royal colony with a crown-appointed governor. Foiled a second time, Franklin stayed on to represent the assemblies of Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Massachusetts in arguing against the new British program of colonial taxes and stricter regulations.

Frustrated again, Franklin headed back to Philadelphia and arrived in early 1775 ready to assist the armed revolution against British rule. In 1777, he left America for Paris to seek French military assistance. Persistent, tactful, and engaging, Franklin dazzled the French and won the alliance that proved essential to the Americans' military victory. Morgan remarks that "the experience was a little intoxicating, or would have been for a lesser man." In 1782 and 1783, Franklin led the American commission that negotiated an extraordinarily favorable peace treaty with the British.

In 1785 Franklin returned home in triumph, but not yet to the quiet retirement that he claimed to covet. He won election

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and re-election as the "president" of Pennsylvania's executive council (the closest thing to a governor under the state's revolutionary constitution). In 1787, he represented his state in the convention that met in Philadelphia to draft a new, more national constitution for the American union. Slowed by age, Franklin played a minimal role in the convention. Retiring from politics, he died in 1790, at the age of eighty-four.

To narrate this rich but often contentious life, Morgan relies almost exclusively on the materials that Franklin himself wrote or received, currently available on a CD-ROM produced by the Packard Humanities Institute and in the process of book publication by Yale University Press in a series of forty-six edited volumes. Morgan's new book, as he acknowledges, is "the result of reading everything on the disk and in the volumes but not much else, and therefore pretty one-sided, a letter of introduction to a man worth knowing, worth spending time with." Comfortable with his CD-ROM, Morgan neglects the works of other historians and avoids visiting the archival collections of Franklin's contemporaries, who often radically dissented from Franklin's perspective. Consequently, Morgan can tell only half the story, for the one-sided sources skew his interpretation, denying fair play to Franklin's opponents and lacking sufficient complexity to explain Franklin's personality. Justifying a half-effort as an introduction will not do, for in these pages we meet the impossible: a superficial Franklin. "Through his papers we can perhaps know him more thoroughly and comprehensively than his contemporaries could," Morgan insists. In fact, by depending almost exclusively on Franklin's friends and his own carefully crafted paper trail, Morgan misses darker dimensions too well known to his rivals.

Franklin shrewdly cultivated a charming, genial persona that dazzled his friends and now dazzles his biographer. "We may be permitted a small regret of our own for having been born too late to enjoy his company," Morgan elegiacally observes. "We can never catch the warmth of his smile, the tone of his voice, the little gestures, the radiant presence that drew people to him wherever he went." Sometimes Morgan indulges his regret in the present tense, a voice of I-am-there-with-Franklin, who "likes to be in the open air, walking the city streets, walking the countryside, walking the deck of a ship. Indoors, he likes to be with people, sipping tea with young women, raising a glass with other men, playing chess, telling jokes, singing songs." Presenting the Founding Father as a boon companion, Morgan concludes that "wherever Franklin went, people loved him. Wherever he lived, he made friends, close friends, loyal friends, adoring friends." He was "a man with a wisdom about himself that comes only to the great of heart."

Occasionally, Morgan considers that there might be more to Franklin than his sunny public persona revealed: "by now it must be apparent that Franklin is not so easy to know as he sometimes seems to be." After all, Franklin advised, "Let all Men know thee, but no man know thee thoroughly." Yet Morgan quickly reassures us that Franklin modestly masked only the depths of his commitment to the well-being of others, which ran to the very core of his being: "he is so hard to know because it is so hard to distinguish his natural impulses from his principles." But Morgan is not fooled: "if Franklin holds something back, he does not deceive us."

And so Morgan cannot easily account for the enemies who found Franklin's charms devious and dangerous. Morgan's first strategy is to minimize their number and to attribute their spite to politics: "true, in the course of a long life, especially after he entered politics, he made enemies and sometimes returned their enmity. But he made far more friends." In fact, the young Franklin made his share of enemies before his mid-life venture into politics. Ambitious and opportunistic, Franklin could turn his charm off as well as on. His youthful departure from the service of his brother James was abrupt, acrimonious, and illegal. In 1724, Franklin violently quarreled and permanently broke with his closest friend, John Collins, who drank and gambled excessively. The Philadelphia printer Samuel Keimer hired Franklin but soon came to distrust him, provoking a sudden and angry discharge. Franklin went into business with a partner, Hugh Meredith, who provided more capital than ability. Once their newspaper succeeded, Franklin found new investors and replaced Meredith, who felt betrayed. To sell copies of his new almanac, Franklin predicted in print that his chief rival, the almanac writer Titan Leeds, would soon die. When Leeds protested, Franklin depicted him as an imposter, masking the real man's death: a gambit that amused readers far more than it amused Leeds. Given how prominently these five conflicts appear in even the most laudatory lives of Franklin, their omission by Morgan is especially striking.

As Franklin plunges into politics, and his enemies proliferate, Morgan explains them away as vicious or crazy. Thomas

Untitled

To work against the light. There is no other reason for coming this far, this early. To work against the grain. To listen. To rescue the kite cut

loose from its string. To rescue the string when the kite's beyond you. These are not reasons, but give them time and they will rise like

a small army. To believe that what you know is somehow better off without you. There's enough here to make your house stand up to

the more ambitious winds of the season. Enough for you to take up your father's cause, finish the long walk he was on when he slipped into

the white fields of reason. Into the trout stream. Into the music of his numbers. There's still enough light to make the most of an unfinished

moment, to blur the voices so that the conversation is always sfumato, each day a witness to the rise and fall of severed

words reconstructing themselves like starfish. Possible sounds emerge slowly, gathering strength as they approach you like the passerby, years

ago, who asked you for directions to the very spot where he stopped you, then moved on, occasionally looking over his shoulder at

you looking over your shoulder at him until the night reduced the man to footsteps, and distance reduced his footsteps to the night you

claim when you remember—but refuse to believe—how dark it was, how far you walked before you lost him, how long before he found you again.

Dionisio D. Martínez

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Penn declared: "He is a dangerous Man and I should be very Glad he inhabited any other Country, as I believe him of a very uneasy Spirit." After one especially contentious interview, Penn denounced Franklin for "vile misrepresentation" and refused any further contact, while Franklin ranted and raged. But Morgan sees the bright side: "His anger even adds a little spice to a personality that would be almost too lovable without it." Franklin also alienated prominent crown ministers, principally Lord Hillsborough, the secretary of state for the colonies. By reading only Franklin's side of their dispute, Morgan casts Hillsborough as "a prime example of the heedless aristocrat whom British politics could drop into positions of authority." True enough, Hillsborough was a stickler for imperial authority, but he was also a dedicated, efficient, and principled administrator.

WEDDED TO FRANKLIN'S perspective, Morgan contrasts the corruption of British politics (of which there was plenty) with American virtue (which was scarcer than legend insists). This polarity obscures Franklin's eager ability to play the British game for personal gain—and Hillsborough's capacity for self-sacrifice. Seeking wealth and power, Franklin assembled a cartel of colonial and English grandees with political clout to lobby the crown to grant them a new colony of twenty million acres of fertile land in the Illinois country, then an Indian domain. The partners would profit from the colony's patronage and by selling the Indians' lands to colonial settlers. Hillsborough recognized that the ill-conceived colony would cost a fortune to administer, and provoke war with the Indians, and increase rather than reduce colonial insubordination. Stubborn in his conviction, Hillsborough committed political suicide by blocking the grant, offending powerful politicians who were in on Franklin's land scheme. They forced Hillsborough's resignation in 1772. Morgan barely mentions this episode, so revealing of character in both Franklin and Hillsborough, and so important to the growing crisis between America and Britain. Preferring that Franklin represent American virtue, Morgan attributes the wheeling and dealing to bribe British politicos entirely to Franklin's English partner, Thomas Walpole.

During the Revolution, Franklin reaped a new set of American rivals, who did not consider him a paragon of virtue. From 1777 to 1778, Congress saddled Franklin in Paris with two fellow commissioners, one the notoriously corrupt Silas Deane, whom Franklin defended, and the other the congenitally suspicious Arthur Lee, whom Franklin despised. Franklin abruptly dismissed Lee's suspicions that their secretary, Edward Bancroft, was a British spy. In fact, Bancroft was indeed on the British payroll. Sometimes paranoids do have enemies. Morgan does not mention Bancroft, the better to share Franklin's insistence that Lee was simply insane.

In 1778, Congress replaced Lee with John Adams, who soon shared most of Lee's suspicions and added a few of his own. Adams regarded Franklin as lazy, dissipated, devious, and too accommodating to French interests. Adams also blamed Franklin for the many disputes in the American delegation: "Franklin's cunning will be to divide us. To this end, he will provoke, he will insinuate, he will intrigue, he will maneuver." Siding with Franklin, Morgan dismisses "Adams's ravings" as "paranoid delusions of persecution and treachery." To vindicate Franklin, Morgan contradicts the celebration of Adams in David McCullough's recent biography. In the recent spate of popular biographies of Founders, readers find one placed on a pedestal at the expense of foolish others.

IN ADDITION TO taking Franklin's rivals more seriously, a more thorough biographer would have examined Franklin's family life more closely and critically. Before marrying, he fathered a child out of wedlock, perhaps with a servant. Franklin later rather ungallantly praised his marriage to Deborah Read as necessary to satisfy the physical cravings that had previously led him into the dangerous embraces of prostitutes. Poorly educated, Deborah did not serve Franklin's ambitions to move in learned and high society; for years he left her behind in Philadelphia to pursue his career in London. When he was away, his letters to her were dull and formulaic. With or without her, Franklin flirted in person and in correspondence with a formidable array of women, increasingly of an age to be his daughters. But Morgan sees no marital evil, insisting that "Franklin's marriage to Deborah was loving and happy" and concluding that "Deborah never faltered in her love and trust; and he never lost a deep affection for her, though we will never know whether he remained sexually faithful during his long absences." Certain that Franklin never deceives him, Morgan invokes uncertainty only to deny the bad news.

Franklin's troubled relationship with his son William also warrants more careful probing before we conclude that the father's affability ran to his very core. Initially devoted to William, Franklin secured his appointment in 1762 as royal governor of New Jersey. But in 1775, when William chose loyalty to empire over deference to his father, Franklin abruptly, angrily, and permanently broke with his son. Despite having defied his own father (in leaving Boston), Franklin pulled patriarchal rank to demand that his son defer to his politics: "there are natural duties which precede political ones, and cannot be extinguished by them." Franklin did nothing when his fellow revolutionaries imprisoned his son. Instead, Franklin took in William's son—William Temple Franklin—and taught him to despise his father. After the war, Franklin coldly rebuffed William's earnest attempts at family reconciliation. Morgan reports these events in passing as if they revealed nothing fundamental about Franklin's character.

MORGAN'S BASIC PREMISE—that Franklin was a lovable, ingenuous, and talented man with lots of friends—cannot illuminate Franklin's many political misjudgments, which reveal a man too proud of his subtlety and too sure of his superiority. Especially frequent during his stint in London as a colonial agent, Franklin's mistakes exacerbated the imperial crisis that he longed to alleviate. Franklin foolishly and stubbornly worked to make Pennsylvania a royal colony, despite abundant evidence that the crown had no interest in challenging Thomas Penn, and that the empire would prove a more powerful and demanding master than the proprietor. Underestimating colonial resentment of the Stamp Tax, Franklin secured an appointment as tax collector in Pennsylvania for a friend, who soon rued the day when mob intimidation compelled his resignation. To relieve the violent crisis provoked by that tax, Franklin pitched to British authorities a specious distinction between internal taxes (such as the Stamp Tax), which Americans would never accept, and external taxes (such as customs duties), which they long had accepted. In fact, they opposed both. Consequently, Franklin's facile distinction enabled Parliament to lift one crisis by repealing the Stamp Tax, only to substitute another by levying increased duties on colonial imports. Morgan clearly reveals these missteps, but he treats each as an exception to the rule of Franklin's superior insight, failing thereby to recognize the damning picture that emerges as the "exceptions" accumulate.

In 1773, Franklin alienated most of the

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British elite by procuring stolen letters, which he promptly sent to the radical leaders in Massachusetts. The letters revealed that the colony's royal governor, Thomas Hutchinson, had urged tighter British restrictions on American liberties. Incredibly, Franklin believed that the letters would relieve the imperial crisis by persuading Americans that they should blame only Hutchinson in particular and not the British administration in general for the tensions. Franklin expected his correspondent to show the letters only to trusted associates and to keep them out of the press by all means. Instead, Franklin's friends published the letters, creating an uproar in Massachusetts against Hutchinson—and in Britain against Franklin. By dealing in purloined letters, Franklin violated the code of honor expected of gentlemen. The royal Privy Council summoned Franklin to a hearing at which the acerbic prosecutor Alexander Wedderburn subjected him to an hour of diatribe, to the great applause and amusement of the Lords and a gallery of spectators. The government then summarily dismissed Franklin from his office as deputy postmaster general for the colonies.

With some cause, British officials considered Franklin a cunning intriguer who sowed misunderstandings, but they mistook his miscalculations for a conscious and cunning plot to destroy the empire—which in fact he wanted to save (on colonial terms). To absolve Franklin, Morgan blames the British; his Franklin spent "year after year trying to patch up the empire, trying to undo the mistakes of a heedless ministry, trying to guide colonial protests in constructive ways, trying to interpret them constructively to an uncomprehending English public." True enough, Franklin tried to do all those things; but he was too confident in his powers of reason and manipulation, and so he made mistakes that deepened the mistrust shared by Britons and Americans, hastening a civil war between kindred peoples. Franklin's tragedy is that no one had better appreciated the potential of the united empire, and no one had been better situated to speak frankly to both peoples, to clarify their dispute before it proved fatal to thousands. ■

Blood, Sweat, and Fears

By JOHN LUKACS

Churchill's Cold War: The Politics of Personal Diplomacy by Klaus Larres

(Yale University Press, 592 pp., $40)

WINSTON CHURCHILL'S public career, which lasted from 1899 to 1955, was very long. The very large—and still accumulating—literature about him customarily concentrates on World War I and especially World War II, extraordinary and inspiring as his leadership during the latter was. Yet no less extraordinary (and debatable) were his efforts—and his vision—during the Cold War, both before and during his second premiership, from 1951 to 1955. Until recently, there has been surprisingly little scholarly study of Churchill and the Cold War.

JOHN LUKACS's *Churchill: Visionary, Statesman, Historian* was recently published by Yale University Press.

There was, of course, his "Iron Curtain" speech in Fulton, Missouri in March 1946, generally described and interpreted as one of the founding documents of the Cold War, together with George Kennan's Long Telegram and his "X" article in *Foreign Affairs*, as well as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan and so on. It was an early warning about Stalin and communism, just as he had warned early about Hitler and National Socialism: so Churchillian, so right. Such a reading of the great speech is not altogether wrong; but it is not subtle enough. It overlooks matters that suggest an essential difference between Churchill's and the Americans' (and also many other people's) view of the Cold War from the very beginning.

As late as March 1946, not only Harry Truman and Dean Acheson but also much of the American press, right and left alike, including many of the self-declared coldest (or hottest) warriors, still found it necessary to distance themselves from Churchill's stern Iron Curtain declaration; but that particular difference soon faded away. What would not fade away was a fundamental difference between Churchill's view of the conflict and Washington's view of it, a difference that devolved into a veritable chasm by the time Eisenhower and Dulles would steer the giant American ship of state. Churchill's main subject and concern was the division of Europe. The main subject and concern of the American worldview, beginning in 1946 and lasting for four decades, was international communism. Churchill's principal preoccupation was the unnatural extension of a Russian military presence into the center of Europe, of which the establishment of communist governments east of the Iron Curtain was merely a consequence, not a cause.

Churchill believed—as he said as early as September 1939—that the key to the Russian "enigma" (if an enigma it was) was "Russian national interest," something that had to be seriously considered. An undue extension of a Russian imperial domain was clearly dangerous for the West; but it was also a danger for Russia itself, and that had to be taken into account. Thus, unlike many of his latecoming American allies, Churchill still believed in an eventual re-negotiation of Russia's newly acquired sphere of interest, rather than in a crusade against it. To correct the division of Europe: this was his principal ambition until the last day of his public life, nine years after his Iron Curtain warning. Yet the purpose of American policy, including NATO, was to maintain—indeed, to solidify—the division of Europe. This was a difference not of emphasis but of substance.

THE DISAGREEMENT CAME to a head during Churchill's second prime ministership. The Cold War, and the popular sentiments fueling it (including the McCarthy phenomenon), were then at their feverish heights. Yet significant events appeared to gather in a different direction, inspiring Churchill. Only six weeks after his wartime companion Eisenhower became the American president, Stalin suddenly died. The new and anxious Russian leadership showed many signs of unsureness. It announced reforms and—for the first time—the slogan of "coexistence" with the West. Revolts broke to the surface within its domains, including in East Germany in June 1953. There was a final armistice in Korea. The swollen

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Russian empire embarked on a policy of cautious retreat in Finland, Yugoslavia, Manchuria, and Austria; and in 1955, when Churchill finally retired, Moscow officially recognized the West German state without demanding that the Western powers recognize East Germany. Both publicly and privately, Eisenhower and Dulles declared these moves to be nothing but communist trickery; on at least one occasion Eisenhower said to Churchill that Russia was a "whore" and would not change.

But Churchill did not think so. As early as 1950 he advocated attempts to re-negotiate the conditions of the Cold War with Russia, foremost among them the rigid division of Europe. He said that "the central factor of Soviet policy was fear.... Moscow feared our friendship more than our enmity... the growing strength of the West would reverse this, so that they would fear our enmity more than our friendship and would be led thereby to seek our friendship." Thereafter he tried to impress the departing Truman and Acheson, and then the incoming Eisenhower and Dulles, to attempt a new kind of negotiations with Moscow at the summit.

On May 11, 1953 Churchill made one of his last great speeches in Parliament. In this historic speech, he questioned the Western tendency to accept the status quo and the division of Europe: "I do not believe that the immense problem of reconciling the security of Russia with the freedom and safety of Western Europe is insoluble." Eisenhower and Dulles rejected Churchill with contumely. Several times thereafter, in Washington and in Bermuda, Churchill tried to make them agree to a last Churchillian attempt to meet with the new Russian leaders (Malenkov and Molotov). He assured Eisenhower and Dulles that he was "not willing to appease the Soviet Union under all circumstances," but he insisted that they "ought to do justice to what is happening in Russia and to the many favorable events which have occurred." All of this was in vain. He wrote to Anthony Eden (then his foreign secretary) dejectedly: "it appeared as though the West was intent on maintaining and even stabilizing the partition of Europe... we cannot accept as justified or permanent the present division of Europe." He wanted to loosen that division, including some improvement of trade with the East: "friendly infiltration can do nothing but good." Eisenhower's retort was that the swords must be sharpened "for the struggle that cannot possibly be escaped."

There was, in sum, a period during the Cold War—more precisely, from Stalin's speech in March 1952 proposing a unification of Germany to the Geneva Summit in 1955, after Churchill's retirement—when a mitigation of the Cold War, including a re-negotiation of some of its most troublesome tensions, was possible or even probable. It is regrettable that the horde of contemporary historians and politologues have almost entirely overlooked this, at least until recently. The first "revisionists" of the Cold War—a poor term, since all history is revisionist by its very nature—were opportunistic ideologues of the 1960s who simply projected their dislike of the Vietnam war onto the origins of the Cold War in the years between 1945 and 1948, arguing (often dishonestly) that the conflict mostly resulted from American provocations of the Soviet Union. Another kind of revisionism appeared after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when respected historians pursuing the obvious (or, rather, what seemed obvious) with the enthusiasm of shortsighted detectives, declared that "we now know" the historical truth: communist Russia, and Russia alone, was the source and the origin of the Cold War, and of all the problems, including the division of Europe, during the Cold War.

Yet both "schools" entirely overlooked, or failed to see, the significance of the period between 1952 and 1955, and of Churchill's vision—until recently, when scholars, German scholars especially, have begun to masticate and to swallow and to digest the accumulating evidence, provided mostly by Russian sources. These prove that, at least in 1952 and 1953, a re-negotiation of the division of Germany was seriously debated and pondered in Moscow, even during Stalin's last twelvemonth; that the Russians (possibly Stalin, but certainly his minion Lavrenti Beria, the head of the KGB) were even considering ditching the East German communist state in exchange for a united and neutral Germany from which Russian and American troops would be withdrawn. (One of the more startling pieces of evidence is the brutal admonition of the Soviet high commissioner for Germany, Vladimir Semenov, to the shocked leaders of the East German state in Moscow, a week before the East Berlin workers' revolt in June 1953: reform and watch out, he said, because "in a few weeks you won't even have a state anymore.")

It is natural and expectable that a concerned re-examination of these past events should be of particular concern to German historians. Klaus Larres, a German-born scholar, is now a professor in Belfast. He does not read Russian, but he has read everything (well, almost everything) about this period; and the most interesting portion of his massive book deals with the Germanies in and around 1953. At times he admits what is still often unsayable among German *bien-pensant* historians: that Chancellor Konrad Adenauer thought that "reunification had to be sacrificed for the time being." Adenauer's distrust of Churchill throughout those years was evident; but Larres notes, too, that in contrast to his own Foreign Office, Churchill "doubted the desirability of the continued partition of Germany." His book is especially good and useful about the international origins and repercussions of the East German uprising in June 1953. Still, it is at least arguable that the revolt was principally "caused by the dire economic situation and rapidly deteriorating standard of living in [East Germany]." Churchill saw the situation more clearly: he said that the greatest crisis for a tyrannical regime occurs when it feels forced to reform—an effect that the great Tocqueville had noted as early as 1848. In any event, Larres's massive volume is a considerable contribution to scholarship. And massive it is, almost half of its contents consisting of long notes, set in small type, on 137 pages, and then a bibliography of nearly 1,500 items.

But there are problems. *Churchill's Cold War* is better about the Cold War than about Churchill. A book about Churchill and Germany, and another one about Churchill and "Europe," still remains to be written (the first primarily to revise the often accepted notion, especially among German historians, that Churchill was a committed Germanophobe throughout his life). It was not necessary for Larres to begin his book with a long chapter on Churchill's "personal diplomacy" before 1914, involving the German and British naval programs: this is an undue extension. Another limitation is Larres's sometimes insufficient treatment of Churchill's relationships with Stalin and Roosevelt during World War II, from which of course much of the Cold War later resulted.

There are errors in this portion of the book. Larres writes that, when Churchill's confidential correspondence with Roosevelt began in 1939, he "believed too much in himself to worry about the fact that he was virtually ignoring the Foreign Office as well as the British and American ambassadors in his high-level diplomacy with Roosevelt." No: Churchill told and showed everything to Chamberlain and Halifax. In 1943 Stalin did not make a "decision to encourage intensive contacts

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with the German Embassy in Stockholm": the contacts were not intensive and they did not go through the embassy (more correctly, the legation). Roosevelt was not "strongly influenced by his Secretary of State," and he did not "avoid" meeting Churchill—they met in Cairo before the summit in Tehran. Larres's treatment of the very important Percentages' Agreement between Churchill and Stalin in October 1944 (when they made a rough sphere-of-interest division of the Balkans and Greece), and of the British decision to turn the concerns about Greece and Turkey over to the Americans in 1947, is perfunctory. "In late 1945 and early 1946," he writes, "it still appeared that Washington favored a policy of isolationism." Not so.

"The politics of personal diplomacy" is the subtitle of Larres's book. It is true that Churchill had a strong inclination to discuss and to settle things at the "summit" (he first employed this term in 1941), and that the Foreign Office, especially from 1951 to 1955, was critical of such an approach. But "personal diplomacy" is too much of a blanket term. Roosevelt, Stalin, and de Gaulle (not to mention Napoleon or Bismarck) all engaged in personal diplomacy, often successfully. Indeed, in the relations between states, high-level personal relationships are often more profitable than lower-level diplomatic relationships that are impersonal, legalistic, and technical.

Larres is unduly critical of Churchill. He berates him during World War II for his "grandiose and woolly rhetoric.... The United States had a much more lofty vision." Grandiose, perhaps; but woolly? And were not the Four Freedoms, or, say, the United Nations, also grandiose? On occasion, moreover, Larres contradicts himself, sometimes on the same page: he remarks upon "Churchill's vacillations about Europe," and a few lines later comments on Churchill's "own deeply held convictions regarding the shape of postwar Europe." Churchill "needed to avoid American domination of Europe after the war," but his main worry was that after the war the Americans would take their troops home from Europe. There are other contradictory statements in this otherwise valuable and serious tome.

I MUST NOW raise the only serious question about Larres's thesis, which is stated on page 123 and repeated again and again: "The key to a proper understanding of Churchill's summit diplomacy after the Second World War is his desire to maintain the power and influence of Britain." Well, during the war, yes. After the war, no. "After becoming Prime Minister once more," Larres asserts, "Churchill concentrated his energies almost exclusively to uphold Britain's great power status ... by attempting to relax and perhaps even end the Cold War through an informal Anglo-American summit conference with the Soviet Union." But his emphasis was on the latter, not on the former. Ever since 1943—and Churchill admitted this at Tehran—he knew that Britain no longer had power even remotely equal to that of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Churchill wished to diminish the Cold War, and to avoid the deadly prospect of a nuclear war, by at least partly dismantling the Iron Curtain and thus mitigating the partition of Europe. On occasion Larres understands this: "Churchill's ultimate aim was the end of the Cold War and with it 'the unity and freedom of the whole of Europe.'" But elsewhere Larres states that Churchill was not interested in the eventual integration of Europe. Now, it is true that Churchill never proposed that Britain should join a united or federated or confederated Europe. Yet he certainly believed that the fate of Europe and the fate of Britain were inseparable; his statements about the primacy of Europe would fill a small book. This was, after all, the most significant difference between him and the appeasers during the 1930s: the latter were unwilling to contest Hitler's domination of Europe if the Empire could remain intact, while Churchill was convinced that such a policy was not only immoral but impossible.

Consider also Churchill's memo to Eden on October 22, 1942, even before the military turning points of Stalingrad, El Alamein, or North Africa: "I must admit that my thoughts rest primarily in Europe—the revival of the glory of Europe, the parent continent of the modern nations and of civilization. It would be a measureless disaster if Russian barbarism overlaid the culture and independence of the ancient states of Europe." During the war Churchill remained unimpressed by Roosevelt's fanciful notions about world government; he argued that Europe ought to be Britain's "prime care." After the war he was the prime advocate of a closer union of Western Europe and a godfather of the Council of Europe, established by a congress at The Hague in 1948.

From 1951 to 1955, Churchill failed to make a dent in Eisenhower's and Dulles's ideological convictions. This was at least partly his own fault. He had expected too much from his wartime comradeship with Eisenhower. There was a strong element of personal vanity in his belief that he could impress the new Russian leaders by talking to them directly, and thus end his historic career as an architect of the gradual cessation of the Cold War. He was also aging rapidly, and tired, and affected by a stroke, and wanting in self-discipline and stamina (often not doing his homework), and at times indifferent to the contrary advice of men of his own government. All this is true—and yet the historical record (and not only the revelations from the available Russian documents and sources) suggests that perhaps a great chance may have been missed fifty years ago, when Churchill, as so often during his life, was willing to act on his own vision and go against the tide, and when he was right and his opponents were wrong.

Here Larres misreads the evidence of public opinion and popular sentiment. It is not true that American politicians in 1953 were "worried of the popular appeal of the Soviet peace campaign." To the contrary: many of them quailed before McCarthy, and many more of them before the prospect of not seeming sufficiently anti-Communist. "The great majority" of the populations in the United States and West Germany certainly did not welcome Churchill's 1953 initiative; nor was there "a radical change in American diplomacy after the uprising" in East Berlin.

Well before his resignation, Churchill predicted that West Germany would be admitted to NATO and that, more significantly, the Russians would agree to a mutual evacuation of Austria. There is, finally, a stunning piece of evidence about Churchill's vision that Larres has missed. On New Year's Day in 1953 (note that Stalin was still living then), Churchill told his secretary, Jock Colville, that if he lived his normal span Colville "should assuredly see Eastern Europe free from communism." Counting Colville's expectable threescore and ten, this would have been the 1980s—which was exactly what happened and when. Bismarck once said that the most a statesman could look ahead was about five years. Churchill did better than that. We must give him his due, as Klaus Larres also does; but less reluctantly. ■

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GREEN BAY DIARIST

Free Ride

ONE OF THE PERKS OF appearing on prime-time cable television is the hired car most shows will send to shuttle you between your office and their studio. In the world of political punditry, a subculture frequently derided as elitist, this is a surprisingly democratic touch. I'm a relatively obscure staff person at a relatively obscure opinion magazine. I've made a grand total of four TV appearances during my career as a journalist. Three of those coincided with major holidays—when the usual talent was away. It's not a stretch to say I'm not what would be considered a major TV personality. And yet I'm entitled to the same Lincoln Town Car as brand-name pundits like Bill Kristol and Howard Fineman.

I MADE MY FIRST TRIP IN THE TOWN Car in New York a little over a month ago. Because of all the pre-Thanksgiving traffic, it took the driver about 20 minutes to take me the seven blocks to the studio. But, other than that, and the fact that the driver dropped me off at the Port Authority on the return trip (so I could catch a bus to my parents' house in New Jersey), I have to assume the experience was pretty standard. My second go-round in the Town Car was slightly less so. On the Friday before Christmas, I received a message from a producer of this same show asking me if I was available for a weekly political roundup the following Thursday. Technically, I was free. But in practice I was going to be in Wisconsin, visiting my girlfriend's family for the holidays. I explained all this in a plaintive message to the producer, assuring her I would be delighted to do the show but for this minor logistical hitch. She called back and assured me that I could easily do the show from a local studio in some nearby, yet-to-be-determined city. So, at precisely 1:15 the following Thursday afternoon, the now-familiar black sedan pulled up in the driveway of my girlfriend's childhood home in suburban Green Bay to spirit me off to Madison—150 miles away. It was at this point that what had begun as a casual Christmas officially snowballed into a Reese Witherspoon movie.

IN ADDITION TO THE OBVIOUS, THERE are a couple of subtle differences between a short trip through midtown Manhattan and a two-and-a-half-hour ride through the cornfields and dairy farms of Wisconsin. The first is the relationship between passenger and driver. In Manhattan, there's no point in pretending that getting picked up in a Lincoln Town Car is routine if it's not. As the driver has picked up hundreds of people, most of whom have presumably taken dozens of similar rides, he will quickly detect even the slightest hint of inexperience or, worse, gauche enthusiasm. I learned this during my New York trip, when I coyly began sifting through the singles in my wallet as we pulled up to the studio. He politely explained that he would be my driver for the return trip as well, so it might be more convenient to tip him all at once. In Wisconsin, on the other hand, the absurdity of having someone drive you 300 miles to do a 15-minute TV segment is far too great for either party to confront head on. Instead, both passenger and driver try to play it off like an everyday occurrence, implausible as both know this to be. "So we're going to Madison today, huh?" my driver greeted me, saying this about as casually as I've ever heard anyone discuss an itinerary. "Yep, yep," I slowly nodded in response, as though I were the kind of person who hired a driver to take me to the 7-Eleven.

THE SECOND DIFFERENCE IS YOUR own sense of self-worth. In New York, every third person is being chauffeured around in a car just like yours, yet you, the uninitiated, are deeply impressed with yourself nonetheless. In rural Wisconsin, where you might as well be riding in the alien mothership that abducted "Rael" in 1973, people can't help but notice you. And noticing them notice you produces a form of discomfort somewhere between sheepishness and outright embarrassment. To mitigate this, I tried thrusting a newspaper in front of my face. But at the exact points when I was most conspicuous—that is, when my driver swung out into oncoming traffic to pass a caravan of slow-moving pickup trucks—I was least capable of taking my eyes off the road. Instead I just sat and winced.

TO MAKE THINGS WORSE, IT TURNS out every conversation you have with a stranger in Wisconsin ultimately comes back to transportation. Awaiting me at the studio in Madison were half a dozen questions about my commute, all seemingly designed to get me to admit I'd been chauffeured (the network had arranged for the car from D.C.): How long did it take me? Wasn't it nice that the trip was no longer *entirely* along a two-lane highway? Did I think it was as easy a trip as did the cameraman's wife, who used to make the same commute in the opposite direction? I fielded each question with a vague "we"—as in, "Oh yeah, we got here pretty quickly"—and then tried to look like I had some important pundit-preparation ritual to get through.

EASILY THE MOST UNANTICIPATED hired-car-related problem in Wisconsin is what to do with your driver while you're occupied. In New York, driver and car seemed to magically disappear, only to reappear as I exited the studio. In Wisconsin, we arrived an hour early, and both driver and passenger were at a complete loss as to the protocol governing long waits. We just stood in the parking lot, stumped, until finally the driver volunteered that he would go get gas while I went inside. This was a 200-yard drive that he mercifully stretched into a 45-minute excursion. But, when he got back, I was still waiting in the glass-enclosed lobby, in direct view of his parking space. Finally it became unbearable to sit in our respective seats pretending we had things to do. I went out and invited him into the lobby, where we watched "Oprah" on the big-screen television and chatted about driving times between major Wisconsin cities.

THIS SMALL GESTURE OF GOODWILL had the effect of personally investing the driver in my TV appearance. After the show, he perked up and asked how everything had gone. Not well, I said. Before long we were having an improbable discussion about the relative merits of doing television, which, we agreed, was far less satisfying than print and ultimately a poor indication of your worth as a journalist. I think this and the fact that the driver was 20 years older than me gave the situation the feel of childhood soccer practice—when my father would pick me up and I would construct similarly elaborate excuses for my subpar performance.

WHEN WE FINALLY PULLED INTO MY girlfriend's driveway back in Green Bay, I began fumbling around in my pocket the way people do when they don't know whether to tip and are stalling for a clue from the would-be recipient. But the driver saved me the ordeal, explaining that most car companies automatically add a 15 percent gratuity to the bill. We shook hands and wished each other luck. Then I went inside and had dinner.

NOAM SCHEIBER

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The 2002 Elections: Much Sound, Little Fury

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"Now we can look forward to more obscene tax cuts for the rich, wholesale rape of the environment, huge deficits, obstruction of any investigation into corruption and a packed judiciary." Letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle,* November 7, 2002.

According to much postelection commentary a shift of two Senate seats has delivered full control of national policy to the Republicans. Soon oil companies will drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and conservative judges will assume seats on various federal courts, among other Democratic nightmares.

In fact, as any freshman who did not sleep through American Government 101 should know, nothing of the sort is likely to occur. Certainly, there will be some movement. The Homeland Security Bill, for example, has already become law, Democrats having realized that seeming to place the interests of public sector unions over national security was not a winning electoral strategy. In budgetary matters, the Republicans will do better on the margins and a compromise version of prescription drug coverage will pass.

But Republicans with loftier ambitions are likely to be disappointed, for **the switch in control does not greatly increase the likelihood that major Republican legislation will pass the Senate**. The implication of the filibuster is that on most matters (the budget is the exception that seems to have misled so many) sixty Senators must be willing to take up legislation or nominations. Nothing that forty-one or more Democrats strongly oppose will pass. The switch in control has not magically produced sixty votes for a Republican version of a prescription drug bill or a producer-friendly energy policy. Two months ago Tom Daschle could not pass anything that forty-one Republicans were willing to filibuster, and two months from now the same will be true for Trent Lott and forty-one recalcitrant Democrats.

In sum, for those who like policy gridlock, little has changed. **What the switch in control will change is the "show time" aspects of the Senate process.** We will see more of Trent Lott and less of Tom Daschle on TV. There will be more publicity for bills favored by the Republicans, different hearings with different witnesses, and more votes intended to embarrass Democrats. That's the way the game is played.

There is, however, a danger as well as a benefit to the Republicans in their new status as the party in control of the national government. With control comes responsibility for national policies and national conditions. One reason that congressional Democrats fared so badly in the 1994 elections was that Democrats controlled everything and thus took full blame. After Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole assumed leadership of their respective chambers, however, President Clinton was able to shift blame to the Republicans and "triangulate" to reelection, an option now unavailable to President Bush. Republicans now bear full responsibility for the state of the nation during the coming two years, but they have less power than most people realize.

— David Brady and Morris Fiorina

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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